



THE INDEPENDENT

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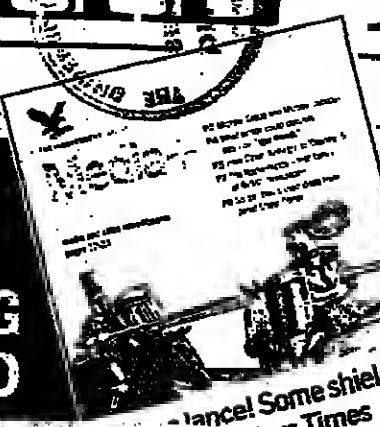
MONDAY 14 JULY 1997

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New strike threat hits BA flights

Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

Tens of thousands of holiday-makers and business travellers faced fresh misery last night, with peace moves at British Airways in imminent danger of collapse.

Leaders of 9,000 cabin crew threatened BA with another three-day stoppage after strikers returning to duty over the weekend were ordered home without pay. Managers told returning employees that they were not needed, despite fulfilling a demand that they guarantee to work normally.

Union officials gave BA until 3pm today to reinstate around 100 stewards and stewardesses or face more industrial action, possibly starting next Tuesday.

The news comes at a time when both sides had declared their readiness to find a solution to a conflict which has already caused severe disruption at Heathrow and Gatwick. Many passengers are experiencing continued inconvenience because the airline is having problems coping with the aftermath of the strike, which ended at 6am on Saturday.

The company blamed unprecedented levels of sickness and logistical difficulties because planes were in the wrong place. However, the airline hoped that the timetable would be back to normal by mid-week.

On Saturday, managers told a number of returning cabin crew to go home on the grounds that there was no work for them, but rescinded the order for union representatives after protests from the Transport & General Worker's Union.

George Ryde, national official of the union, said yesterday that there was no question of the union drawing up proposals to save £42m - the issue at the heart of the dispute - until all his members were reinstated. Cabin crew walked out last Wednesday after BA imposed a new pay package in order to make the saving.

Mr Ryde said: "I don't understand why our people are being told there is no work for them, when there are forty 757s languishing on the tarmac."

He reminded the airline that Bill Morris, the TGWU general secretary, had said on Friday that it was time to "pause for peace".

The fresh problem emerges ahead of the company's annual general meeting tomorrow, when management was hoping to report on a new atmosphere of co-operation, and that preparations for a settlement were continuing apace.

A spokesman for BA insisted that cabin crew had not been suspended: "We will be in touch as soon as we have work for them," he said.

Cabin crew had been made aware before the strike that there could be difficulties in placing them back on the roster because planes would be in the wrong place. The absences had also made it very difficult to deliver a normal timetable. "We have asked the union to set out its proposals to save £42m and we hope they do so," said the airline spokesman.

Prospects of solving another dispute, involving the airline's 9,000 ground staff, were also in the balance last night. Their representatives also meet today to decide whether to press for

fresh negotiations or set dates for strikes. Walkouts would inevitably be co-ordinated with any continuing action by cabin crews.

BA's airport workers are angry over a plan to sell off the company's catering division. The 1,400 workers directly concerned voted last week to reject company proposals to protect their terms and conditions after the sale.

The union will have to decide today whether to seek improvements in the package or opt for strikes in protest at the sell-off.

The airline was still suffering yesterday from the after-effects of last week's stoppage. The company expected that today it would have to cancel 48 out of 122 European flights from Heathrow, seven out of 48 long-haul and 28 out of 60 domestic services.

The airline spokesman, however, said that flights were gradually getting back to normal and that a full timetable should be provided by mid week.

By Saturday, some 2,000 cabin crew had reported sick, although 200 of those have signalled their readiness to return to work, the spokesman said. BA has argued that the high level of sickness during the industrial action was caused by employees' reluctance to go on strike. Union leaders claim the absence was caused by stress following management intimidation.

Some industry sources, however, claimed that many of these stewards and stewardesses who had declared themselves unfit for work were simply employing a device to go on strike while retaining their salaries.

Spain swept by fury at Basque terror



No surrender: A Basque separatist supporter taunts anti-Eta protesters after clashes in Pamplona

Photograph: Desmond Boylan/Reuters

Elizabeth Nash
Erma, Basque Country

Spain, from the Pyrenees to the Canaries, was swept by an unprecedented mass mobilisation against Eta terrorism yesterday following the killing of a Basque conservative local councillor.

In Erma, in the Basque Country, the body of Miguel Angel Blanco, who was shot in the head on Saturday, was brought home to cries of "assassins!" and

"HB [the Herri Batasuna, pro-Eta party] will pay for this" from the crowds.

Blanco's mother, sister and young fiancée wept as they accompanied the coffin into the town hall, where it will stay until the funeral today. Jose Maria Aznar, the Prime Minister, has cancelled all engagements to be there.

And, in the northern city of Pamplona, popular fury and hatred overflowed as hundreds of young people, shouting "sons of bitches!" attacked a smaller

group of Eta sympathisers. Police in riot gear and face masks were forced into the uncomfortable, but common, role of keeping pro and anti-Eta factions apart. Police fired rubber bullets at youths attacking the headquarters of the HB party, kicking protesters and hit them with batons, leaving them bruised and bleeding.

Madrid was blocked by protesters throughout the night until yesterday morning and further demonstrations are planned for coming days. Hundreds are

maintaining a permanent vigil at the heart of the city in the Puerta del Sol.

In Madrid the Basque leader, Jose Antonio Ardanza, demanded the political isolation of HB, and accused them of being "accomplices of Eta" - an unprecedented condemnation from a man who has long sought dialogue with the gunmen. "Eta has dealt a death blow to our hopes for dialogue and reconciliation," he said.

Murder and shame, page 10

Tory whips destroyed evidence

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Damning documents showing the extent to which parliamentary whips influenced the supposedly independent Commons select committees were destroyed - probably by shredding - during the investigation into David Willetts' "dissembling".

The disclosure, by a former Government whip, that Tories disposed of their private notes will raise serious doubts about the freedom of the committees from party manipulation.

New select committees were established last week to represent the balance of MPs in the new parliament.

The disclosure also underlines the extent to which the whips interfered in investigations into sleaze by the former Standards and Privileges Com-

mittee for its report on Neil Hamilton and allegations of payments by Mohamed al Fayed, the owner of Harrods.

The Tory Government whip's office became alarmed when Mr Willetts, then a Government whip, was investigated for writing a note to Alastair Goodlad, then Chief Whip, disclosing conversations he had had about the proceedings of the inquiry into sleaze. Mr Willetts was later accused of "dissembling" in his replies to questions from the committee about the note he sent to the Chief Whip.

The Independent has learnt that, within a week of the inquiry, the Tory whips destroyed all other notes they had on file. A former government whip said: "They waited a few days and then destroyed them. I think they shredded them. They were worried they



Bottomley: Saw reports first

would be called to give them up to the committee.

"Everyone thought it was very harsh on David Willetts. All he was doing was his job. It is part of the game. Everyone knew what the whips were up to."

There have been continuing complaints about the intrusion

of the whips in the select committee system. Tory members of the former health committee, then chaired by Marion Roe, a former Tory minister, were accused of passing their reports and amendments before publication to Virginia Bottomley, then Health Secretary, with the approval of the whips.

Mr Hamilton, who is still protesting his innocence, complained in a note to the Standards and Privileges Committee that he had been a victim of the whips.

The former minister for Corporate Affairs cited Mr Goodlad's predecessor, Richard Ryder, in his evidence to the committee inquiry for allegedly refusing to allow him to see Michael Heseltine, then President of the Board of Trade, and his Cabinet boss, to answer the allegations. He was also denied

permission to communicate to other colleagues in the Commons. "The Chief Whip refused to give me permission for this and told me to 'go back to my department and get on with my job'. He did not tell me that it had already been decided that by lunchtime tomorrow I would not have that job."

Labour whips insist that they did not keep copies of notes sent to Derek Foster, the Labour Chief Whip in Opposition. "We just committed everything to memory. It was all done word of mouth," said a former senior Labour whip.

Parliamentary whips are often accused of practising "black arts" against MPs to impose discipline, but this appears to be the first time they have been accused of deliberately trying to avoid investigation by a Commons select committee.

Hard-boiled husband turns in his grave



Good timing: Brenda Eccles with her husband's remains

Jojo Moyes

Like many people who discover they are dying, Malcolm Eccles set about providing for his wife's needs after he was gone. He considered how he could help her best then had himself reincarnated as an egg timer.

Mr Eccles, 50, said the one thing his wife Brenda, 42, could not cook without him was a soft-boiled egg. So after he died in February, Mrs Eccles arranged for glassblowers and joiners to incorporate his remains in a £150 foot-high time piece.

"It's just what he wanted. I can see him now laughing his head off at me," she said.

Mr Eccles, a screen printer from Oldham, Greater Manchester, was diagnosed two years ago as suffering from

bowel cancer. When doctors broke the news, he and his wife of 14 years went to a local beauty spot to try and come to terms with the shock.

"He said he had worked so hard all his life and enjoyed it, so he couldn't see why he should stop working when he was dead," she said.

"I can't boil a soft egg to save my life, he knew that and said I should turn some of his ashes into an egg timer - then he could help me and it would be a nice way of remembering him."

He said: "At least when you turn me over it will make you smile rather than make you cry."

Staff from the specialist glassblowers LA Studios in Camberwell, south London, created

the egg timer. They enlisted workmen from a neighbouring carpentry firm to make the stand.

"Normally we're used to making wine glasses and vases so this must have been the most extraordinary task we've ever had to undertake," said Andrew Hay, head of LA Studios. "It must have taken us four goes before we got it absolutely right. We just had to leave a hole in the top of the timepiece so we could pour the ashes in," he said.

Mrs Eccles said the couple's daughter, Leanne, thought the timer, which at present empties in under a minute, was "hilarious".

"Malcolm was as daft as a brush, he had a good sense of humour which he kept right



through to the end," she said. "Now if people going through the same thing can get a smile or a laugh out of this then it will all be worthwhile."

Radio 4 chief hits back

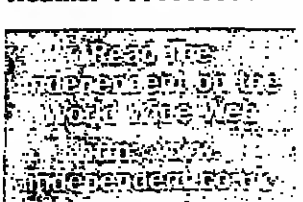
The controller of Radio 4 hit back yesterday at a report which claimed that he is bent on "dumbing down" large swathes of output on the BBC's hitherto most highbrow network - a report which triggered a predictably angry outcry from watchdog groups. Page 3

Synod discusses gays

The Church of England General Synod will today wrestle for the first time in 10 years with the question of its attitude towards homosexual clergy. Page 5

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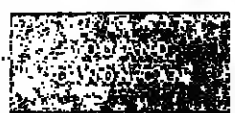
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news

significant shorts

Boy dies in helicopter crash at charity event

A nine-year-old boy died and two adults and three other children were injured – none seriously – in a helicopter crash during a charity event near the Queen Mother's Gables in Perthshire, yesterday. The five injured passengers were taken to Dundee Royal Infirmary after the Jet Ranger helicopter came down in a field less than a mile from the castle just before midday. The victim was later named as Gary Malley, from Dundee.

A spokesman for Tayside Police said the helicopter was one of a number taking about 300 children with disabilities and special needs on rides from the Scottish Transport Extravaganza fete organised in the castle grounds by the Forfar-based Strathmore Vintage Car Club. The helicopters were hired by the children's charity Airborne, which was established by broadcaster Noel Edmonds. It is not yet known what caused the crash, but a spokesman for Tayside Fire Brigade said there may have been heavy rain in the area at the time. Investigators from the Air Accident Investigations Branch are to carry out an inquiry.

Site sought for Scottish parliament

Scotland's new parliament will never sit in the building which has been awaiting its inception for decades, ministers are expected to announce this week. The Royal High School on Calton Hill in Edinburgh is thought to be unsuitable because it lacks office space and debating chamber, and it was reported yesterday that civil servants had been asked to look for alternative venues.

Other possible venues include Edinburgh council's city chambers or even a new building in the city. Another site which has been mentioned is the Donaldson's School for the Deaf, near Murrayfield. The Royal High School was built in the 1820s, but was adapted in the 1970s to house the assembly planned by the last Labour government. Edinburgh Council bought it to preserve it for a future parliament and continues to maintain it. **Fran Abrams**

Family denied legal aid in CJD claim

The children of a woman who died from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease have been denied legal aid to sue the Government for compensation. Thomas Kent had been pursuing the action for damages on behalf of his children John, 8, and Gemma, 10, following his ex-wife Janice's death last September. She was Scotland's 13th CJD victim. But the Scottish Legal Aid Board has rejected the request for legal aid because of doubts about a link between eating BSE-infected meat and contracting CJD. However, it is understood that at least five similar cases have been approved by the Legal Aid Board in England.

Birmingham Six man misses jail life



Paddy Hill, one of the wrongly imprisoned Birmingham Six, yesterday said he wished that he was back in jail after struggling to cope with normal life following his release six years ago. Mr Hill, 51, pictured celebrating his freedom after 16 years behind bars wrongly convicted of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings, said he could not cope and had no way of paying an £827 council tax bill unless he received government compensation. "I couldn't care less if I went back to jail, in fact I wish I was back in prison. I'm a fish out of water on the streets. I can't handle it," he told the Belfast *Sunday World* newspaper. "In prison the only pressure I had to cope with was proving my innocence. On the outside there are bills to pay, decisions to make."

Plan for new car plates twice a year

The burden of keeping up with the Joneses may soon grow more costly, as the Government is considering a system of twice-yearly car number plate changes. The motoring industry has complained that the annual August rush, which accounts for about a quarter of the year's new car sales, is costly and distorts the market. The Department of Transport said: "The most obvious solution, which the motor industry favours, is a bi-annual system of registration."

Lottery jackpot numbers

The winning numbers in Saturday night's National Lottery draw were 4, 9, 27, 37, 44, 45 and the bonus number was 7. The estimated jackpot was £8.3m.

people



Slavica Ecclestone, who is about to become richer than the Queen, with her husband Bernie

Formula One wife on track for rags-to-riches glory

Slavica Ecclestone is already accustomed to the very best that money can buy – private jets, fast cars, luxury villas and a lot of large jewellery – but if her husband's plan to float his Formula One Holdings on the stock market goes ahead, she will become one of the richest women in the world.

Reputed to have a personal fortune of £200m and an annual salary of nearly £30m, Bernie Ecclestone, is the man behind Formula One racing. Not a television camera can be pointed at a car, a wheel not changed in the pits or an advertising hoarding put beside the track without his permission.

However, it has emerged that his wife, Slavica, owns 80 per cent of his company, and if it is floated, as planned, in the autumn, she will not an instant £1.2bn, making her richer than the Queen, whose wealth is estimated at mere £450m.

The irony is that Slavica, a former Amman model who stands a striking 6ft 2in tall beside her

5ft 4in husband, cannot stand motor racing. She leaves that to the man who effectively controls Formula One, working alone in a grey caravan nicknamed The Lubyanka.

Mr Ecclestone is nothing if not shrewd, and despite a 26-year age gap between him and his wife, he knows that his is the safest pair of hands for his empire. She is very clever and her instincts are sharp.

However, before masked robbers ambushed Mrs Ecclestone recently outside their £2m Chelsea house and ripped a £500,000 ring from her finger, relatively few outside motor racing had heard of the couple.

The daylight ambush put 65-year-old Mr Ecclestone and his 36-year-old wife on the front pages of several newspapers and the extent of his influence in the motor racing world began to be appreciated. Without his say so, television viewers in 70 countries would not be able to tune in to their regular diet of Grand Prix.

Mrs Ecclestone has come a long way from her working-class Croatian roots. Her father was a fireman who walked out on her mother when their four children were still young. Slavica left school at 16 to take up modelling and met Mr Ecclestone four years later in 1981 at the Monza motor-racing circuit.

The couple married in 1985 and have two daughters.

The trappings of wealth seem to matter little to Mrs Ecclestone. "I know I can put a £200,000 ring on my finger but it doesn't make any difference to me if I go somewhere in worn-out jeans," she says.

It is all far-removed from her life in Croatia where she had to wait until she was 10 years old before her mother could afford to buy her a proper pair of shoes. "I will never forget my first pair of shoes," she has said. "I slept with them by my bed so they would be the first thing I saw when I woke up."

Kate Watson-Smyth

briefing

EMPLOYMENT

Demands of the job destroying family life

One in four workers do not believe it is possible to have a good family life and get ahead in their current job, according to a new MORI poll.

The ability to balance work with their personal life is the key factor in determining their commitment to their employer by the vast majority of employees, with one in five now saying that they would accept a cut in pay to have more free time. Those under the age of 35 were most concerned about this and men were marginally more worried than women about having enough time for their families. "We are experiencing twin revolutions in our society and they are affecting all areas of our lives," said Liz Bargh, chief executive of WFD, a consultancy specialising in work/life issues which commissioned the poll. "Changes in business have led to greater job insecurity and as a result employees feel a loosened sense of identity with their employers. Add to this more women in the workplace an ageing population, increasing numbers of lone parents and the loss of the extended family support network and you can see why work/life balance is emerging as a key issue for the employee and employer alike."

Glenda Cooper

LIFESTYLE

Exercise regime crucial to dieting

People on a diet may lose weight in the short term by eating less – but will see the pounds pile back on unless they start exercising regularly, scientists are to warn at a conference.

Recent research has shown that more than half the British population is now overweight – with 18 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men classified as obese. Scientists have also confirmed that lack of physical fitness is the main contributor to ill health and early death in overweight people.

The findings are to be discussed at a conference entitled Physical Activity and Healthy Weight Management, being held tomorrow by the Association for the Study of Obesity and the Health Education Authority. Dr Ken Fox, of Exeter University, will tell the conference: "There is compelling evidence that exercise as part of a weight-loss routine is critical to long-term weight management. Physical activity is the key to a fitter, healthier and fat-free life. It's never too late to get started."

TRANSPORT

Oxford gets a first in cycle manners

Glasgow has the fastest drivers, Bristol the most impatient and Oxford the most considerate, according to experts who have produced a city guide for cyclists. They said London drivers show "all the worst mannerisms" but are restrained by the sheer weight of traffic. "The further south you go in Britain, the more manners disappear as soon as drivers get behind the wheel," said Martin Whitfield of urban cycle map producer *CycleCity* Guides. According to Mr Whitfield: Glasgow drivers take advantage of wide streets to speed up outside the rush-hour but show courtesy in even the roughest parts of the city; Bristol drivers are rude and aggressive, probably due to the volume of traffic; Oxford drivers, however, are used to dealing with cyclists and generally hold back when bikes are around.



HEALTH

Teens unfazed by trauma of cancer

Teenagers cope with a diagnosis of cancer better than adults, according to a study. Those told they have the disease are no more anxious or depressed than their peers.

The study of teenagers diagnosed at the Middlesex Hospital, London, found 5 per cent had moderate to severe depression three weeks later, compared with 13 per cent of a group of healthy teenagers. Their parents had higher depression scores than the average. Ruth Allen, the Cancer Research Campaign's nursing fellow, who conducted the research, said: "Teenagers may be anxious and depressed about all sorts of things from family relationships to whether they have the right sort of trainers. We believe being diagnosed with cancer puts all these usual anxieties into the background and focuses their minds on what is important. Rather than being more stressed than usual, one set of worries is replaced by another."

Jeremy Laurence

INDUSTRY

Bosses accused of divisive elitism

British industry operates as "upstairs downstairs" regime with many companies giving managers longer holidays, health insurance schemes and even separate lavatories and showers, according to a new report.

A survey of 550 workplaces by the Manufacturing Science and Finance union revealed "wide gaps" in status and perks between staff and their bosses. Senior managers have separate dining facilities in almost one in five firms. 38 per cent have health insurance schemes, one in three have longer holidays and one in five have separate toilet facilities. MSF general secretary Roger Lyons said: "Until we move on from this Victorian style 'upstairs downstairs' segregation of facilities and benefits, how can we work together to meet the challenges of the next century?"

TOURISM

Travel-trade boom set to continue

Worldwide travel and tourism will create one new job every 2.4 seconds over the next decade, according to a report today from the London-based World Travel and Tourism Council. At present, 262 million are employed in travel and tourism – more than 10 per cent of the global workforce. This figure is expected to rise to 383 million by 2007. The report also estimates that the industry will this year contribute 10.7 per cent to the world's gross domestic product.

Protesters join final rally on site of new runway

Former hostage Terry Waite and Tattler MP Martin Bell joined around 500 campaigners against Manchester Airport's second runway today for a last march through the site before building work begins.

Residents of Mobberley in Cheshire and other nearby villages walked along a footpath on the site of the £172m development before staging a rally.

Veteran campaigners were joined by families walking their dogs and a group of "eco-warriors" who last month were evicted from protest camps on the site.

Mr Bell (right), who defeated Neil Hamilton in the election, said he was there to support his constituents. "I happen to represent a lot of angry, upset and concerned people who believe the runway is a terrible thing. When I fought the election campaign I supported the decision on the runway, but since then I have learnt a lot about it."

"I am here to support my constituents and because I believe they are right to say 'no' to the second runway."

Terry Waite, who was born in the nearby village of Styal, took part in protests against the runway during the eviction of protesters from camps on the



site. "We will continue to fight the building of this runway so I hope this will not be the last time we can walk around here," he said.

"We ask the Government to review this decision and change their policy on air traffic."

Mr Waite said the matter had been referred to Europe because campaigners believed there were irregularities in the way the project was developed.

Work on the development was due to begin in the spring, but was delayed after protesters built tunnels and treeshouses at camps in the Bollin Valley site. The eviction process took around four weeks and the last of the eco-warriors were removed from their tunnels at the end of June.

Prince courts political controversy

The Prince of Wales was criticised by Conservative MPs last night as plans emerged for a series of meetings between himself and ministers this week.

The Prince, who is constitutionally forbidden from entering the party political arena, will appear today with Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. Mr Dewar will urge Scottish employers to back the Prince's Trust and the Prince will present awards connected with the organisation.

Tomorrow he will meet the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, at an event in London where he will promote the Business in the Community charity.

On Wednesday, the Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett will be at a reception for primary school teachers at Prince Charles's home, Highgrove House in Gloucestershire.

Teresa Gorman, Tory MP for Billericay, said the Prince was "wrong and silly". And she added: "If you start getting into

political things you are courting trouble because one side or the other won't like you for it."

However Lord St John of Fawsley, a constitutional expert, said it was acceptable for the Prince to get involved in public issues, provided he did not stray into the realm of party politics.

"The monarchy is perfectly entitled to get involved in political and social issues, but what they must not do is involve themselves in party politics as such," he said. **Fran Abrams**

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Radio 4 chief denies 'dumbing down'

Rob Brown
Media Editor

James Boyle, the controller of Radio 4, hit back yesterday at a Sunday newspaper report which claimed that he is bent on "dumbing down" large swathes of output on the BBC's hitherto most highbrow network - a report which triggered a predictably angry outcry from watchdog groups.

The report suggested that 30 programmes, including *Farming Today* and *Yesterday in Parliament*, are to be axed in a drastic shake-up. It also suggested that heavyweight shows such as *Start the Week* and *The Moral Maze* are to be ousted from their peak-time slots, or replaced with celebrity chat shows.

Contacted at his Edinburgh home, Mr Boyle said: "Dumbing down is out of the question. You can see that from my track record. I've been a head of education in the BBC. I also ran Radio Scotland, bringing it up to an intellectual standard that won it national recognition."

Mr Boyle was dubbed MacBirt after presiding over a drastic cull of presenters and programmes at "Scotland's national network" but no one north of the border ever accused

Radio Four as it is today



AND THE POSSIBLE NEW LINE UP...

6am	9am	10am	11am	11.30am	12 noon	12.30pm	1pm
Today	Talk/Chatshow	Woman's Hour	Drama	Book	Comedy	Consumer	World at One

him of dumbing it down. "I used to be branded a hard-boiled egghead because of the changes I made on Scotland's national network," he said.

Mr Boyle has steadfastly re-

fused to comment on his shake-up plans before he puts them to the Corporation's board of governors at the end of the month, but he was eager to scotch speculation that the emphasis

will be shifting towards comedy and quiz shows in an attempt to woo young listeners. "It's about securing the future of Radio 4 and its proper inheritance: intelligent, educated

people. Intelligence is a premium in today's media. I aim to ensure that Radio 4 preserves the monopoly in that," he said. "Intelligent people appreciate a lot of the present output,

but there won't always be new audiences. We've reached a historical juncture where there are so many other radio networks and TV channels coming on stream plus all sorts of other

lifestyle distractions." Veteran broadcasting campaigner Mary Whitehouse said she was dismayed by the news. "My guess is that the listening public will not want these changes," she

said, imploring the BBC to think again.

Denis MacShane, Labour MP for Rotherham and a former BBC producer, plans to raise the issue of *Yesterday in Parliament* today in Parliament with the Commons Speaker, Betty Boothroyd. "I hope she will share our view that this is a very important link between Parliament and the country and it would be a great shame if it were to disappear," he said.

Sir Roy Strong, former director of the Victoria & Albert Museum, was quoted yesterday as saying: "It is dumbing down time everywhere... It is more important than ever that the BBC should hold the middle ground."

Mr Boyle hit back by saying it was "the greatest irony of all" that this "dumbing down" charge should be levelled in the *Sunday Times*, a once high-brow title which has been undeniably dumbed down by Rupert Murdoch in an attempt to broaden its consumer appeal into the mid-market.

He also pointed out that *Yesterday in Parliament* is produced by the BBC News directorate, so its fate cannot be decided solely by the controller of Radio 4.

Aitken cuts short California holiday

Kim Sengupta

The Jonathan Aitken travel show popped up in two continents over the weekend, as the disgraced former cabinet minister and members of his family appeared and then disappeared in San Francisco and London.

The former Chief Secretary to the Treasury and defence procurement minister was spotted for the first time since he left Britain following the humiliating collapse of his High Court libel case more than three weeks ago.

Mr Aitken was at San Francisco airport with his son, William, sunbanned and wearing a navy flazer and jeans, he said: "I've been on holiday with my son. We had a great time, lots of sun. It was very enjoyable. I've been advised not to make any comments whatsoever on legal and family matters." He is ex-

pected to be questioned under caution by Scotland Yard detectives investigating perjury allegations.

Back in London at the family home in Lord North Street, Westminster, his wife, Lolicia, made a few comments. A Sunday tabloid had allegedly paid a substantial amount for the chat in which she said she was "standing by Jonathan".

Mrs Aitken was wearing a black wig. The precise colour of her hair had become a matter of evidence at the High Court, when the room charge for her husband's now notorious stay at the Paris Ritz was paid by "a dark-haired woman". The former minister had claimed it was Lolicia; his adversaries, the *Guardian* and Granada TV, had held it was an assistant of the Sandi Prince Mohammed. Mrs Aitken had been blonde during the case.

Mrs Aitken said: "I forgive

Jonathan. I believe we all have God inside us. However wicked people are, there is always something good inside."

"I am at home, this is my home, my daughters are here and they are fine. I am not saying anything about the court case except that everything comes in its own time, and we all pay for our sins. We all have to face the truth."

On the day before he withdrew his defamation action, Mr Aitken announced that he was separating from his wife after 18 years of marriage. Both she and the couple's daughter, Victoria, were due to give evidence under oath supporting the former minister's version of the Paris visit.

Afterwards, Lolicia was blamed by her mother-in-law for the debacle over the Ritz bill. Lady Aitken also said she was glad to hear the couple were divorcing, saying it was "the best

thing to come out of all this and was cheap at the price".

Mrs Aitken said: "I am full of forgiveness. Only the truth matters, don't complain, don't explain. That's the advice I'm keeping to at the moment".

She added: "I do feel that Jonathan was holding the sword of truth. Everyone had their bit to say, but everybody will have to face their truth one day."

When asked whether she felt her husband did not tell the truth, she responded "no comment". Mr Aitken and his son had spent the last week at a £500-a-week Sea Ranch property on an isolated stretch of the northern Californian coast. But he cut his holiday short by four days, telling the holiday company "something had come up".

When they left San Francisco, Mr Aitken was due to board a United Airlines jet bound for Paris while William was booked straight through to London.



Aitken: Expected to be questioned by Scotland Yard

Need a people's policy? Ask the People's Panel

Jojo Moyes

The Government's proposed 5,000-strong "People's Panel" of voters, to test attitudes to policies and public services, is the natural conclusion to an increasingly market-driven approach to politics. It is also part of a global trend.

The Cabinet Office, it emerged yesterday, may use the panel to test people's attitudes to services ranging from utility companies to the performance of bus firms. Other departments would also have access to test reaction to existing policies and new proposals. Today the Public Service Minister, David Clark, meets officials in Washington to discuss ways of bringing government and people closer.

Before leaving for the US he said "growing estrangement"

between government and people was a "key problem" facing many democracies.

"My job is to find responses to these problems - ways to bring government and the people together, through listening, learning, and being more open and responsive," he said.

The initiatives are similar to the "electronic town hall" being pioneered by the US Vice-President, Al Gore. In Australia in December a 300-strong "People's Convention" will consider whether to keep the British monarch as its head of state.

The Government has made much of the need to keep in touch with the people, with the Prime Minister embarked on a series of monthly "talk to Tony" sessions.

Yesterday Conservatives were already attacking the idea

as "party political research". One of the regular Tory charges against Labour during the election was that it based its policies on the views of focus groups, not on conviction.

Yet the "People's Panel" has metamorphosed from a number of trends, not least John Major's much-derided Citizen's Charter programme. The focus group originated in the advertising industry, where groups were asked to compare brands, and give detailed reasoning for their answers.

It was introduced to New Labour, with other techniques of the advertising business, by Peter Mandelson. During the general-election campaign virtually no aspect of Labour's image - even down to Mr Blair's smile - was not passed through the focus groups before reaching the wider public.

Lindisfarne's Dark Age gospel factory unearthed

David Keys

The "gospel factory" which produced the vellum for the 1,300-year-old Lindisfarne Gospels and other priceless Dark Age illuminated manuscripts has been discovered by archaeologists.

Excavations have unearthed the bones of scores of calves together with the remains of a vellum-production complex which appears to have consisted of a slaughterhouse, two cattle-buyers and two probable workshops.

The site is just one mile away from Lindisfarne Priory, where in the seventh, eighth and possibly ninth centuries monks produced some of the world's greatest illuminated manuscripts.

A handwritten and hand-illustrated book, the Gospels would have taken as much as two years for a monk to produce.

And each 500-page book would have needed the skins of at least 130 calves to make. Excavations in recent weeks have revealed that most of the slaughtered animals were under a year old and that perhaps a third of them were newly born - just one or two weeks



Book to kill for: A page from the Lindisfarne Gospels

old when they were slaughtered for Gospel manufacture.

Each of the tiny number of monks involved in the actual writing work would have needed more than sixty calf skins

per year. Book production at Lindisfarne lasted at a absolute maximum from the foundation of the priory in AD635 to its virtual abandonment in AD875 - although

the main production period is thought to have been 680 to 750.

Well over 100 books - many of them illuminated - were probably produced over that period, but only a tiny number have survived - including the unfinished Echternach Gospels in Paris, the fragmentary Durham Gospels in Durham Cathedral and the Lindisfarne Gospels, which are themselves currently housed in the British Library in London. Most of the calf bones found by the archaeologists are thought to represent the last year or so of production activity before the site was abandoned in AD875.

Ninth-century coins, knives and a seventh-century brooch have been found on the site, which was hidden beneath sand dunes before the excavation.

"The discovery is very exciting. It's shedding totally new light on the production processes that went into the making of some of the world's most beautiful artworks," said archaeologist Deirdre O'Sullivan, director of Leicester University's Lindisfarne Research Project, which is carrying out the excavations.

Charity golf ban for sexist star

Johnny Briggs, who plays Mike Baldwin in the TV soap *Coronation Street*, has been barred from a charity golf event by a charity disgusted by his recent controversial remarks about women players. It was revealed yesterday.

The Lady Taverners, the celebrity fundraisers, are to write to tell Mr Briggs that he will not be welcome at the golf tournament, due to be held at a top Shropshire course.

The actor caused outrage last week when he wrote that women were "an abomination on the golf course" and described them as "swarming over clubs like cockroaches".

Rachael Heyhoe Flint, organiser of the tournament, which is due to be held on 16

September at the exclusive Pashall Park Hotel, near Wolverhampton, announced the ban on BBC Radio 5 Live's *Breakfast Programme* yesterday morning, denouncing the actor's comments as "insulting and absolutely ignorant".

Later, the cricketer said that she hoped other charities would follow the Lady Taverners' lead in banning the star from their events.

She said: "The organisers felt that it was inappropriate for an event run by a ladies' committee and involving lady players to invite someone who has made such insulting remarks."

"I would hope that other charities where lady golfers are involved will think similarly."

These events are a very nice day out for celebrities involved, with a free round of golf on a fantastic course. Maybe Johnny's golf will, in future, be restricted to his own club at Stourbridge.

Mr Briggs has played in the event in previous years, and the organising committee recently wrote to ask him whether he would be available to play again this year, said Mrs Heyhoe Flint, the former England captain.

The actor wrote back to say that he would like to participate, if he could fit the tournament in between filming episodes of *Coronation Street*, but will now receive a letter telling him his presence is no longer requested.

The annual tournament - dubbed the "Joan Morecombe Celebrity Classic" in honour of the comedian Eric's widow, the event's patron and president of the Lady Taverners - has raised £50,000 over the last seven years to buy minibuses for people with special needs.

Celebrities expected to participate at this year's event include the former Goodie, Tim Brooke-Taylor, the Warwickshire cricketer, Gladstone Small, the former Wolverhampton Wanderers and England striker, John Richards, and ex-England cricketer Fred Rumsey.

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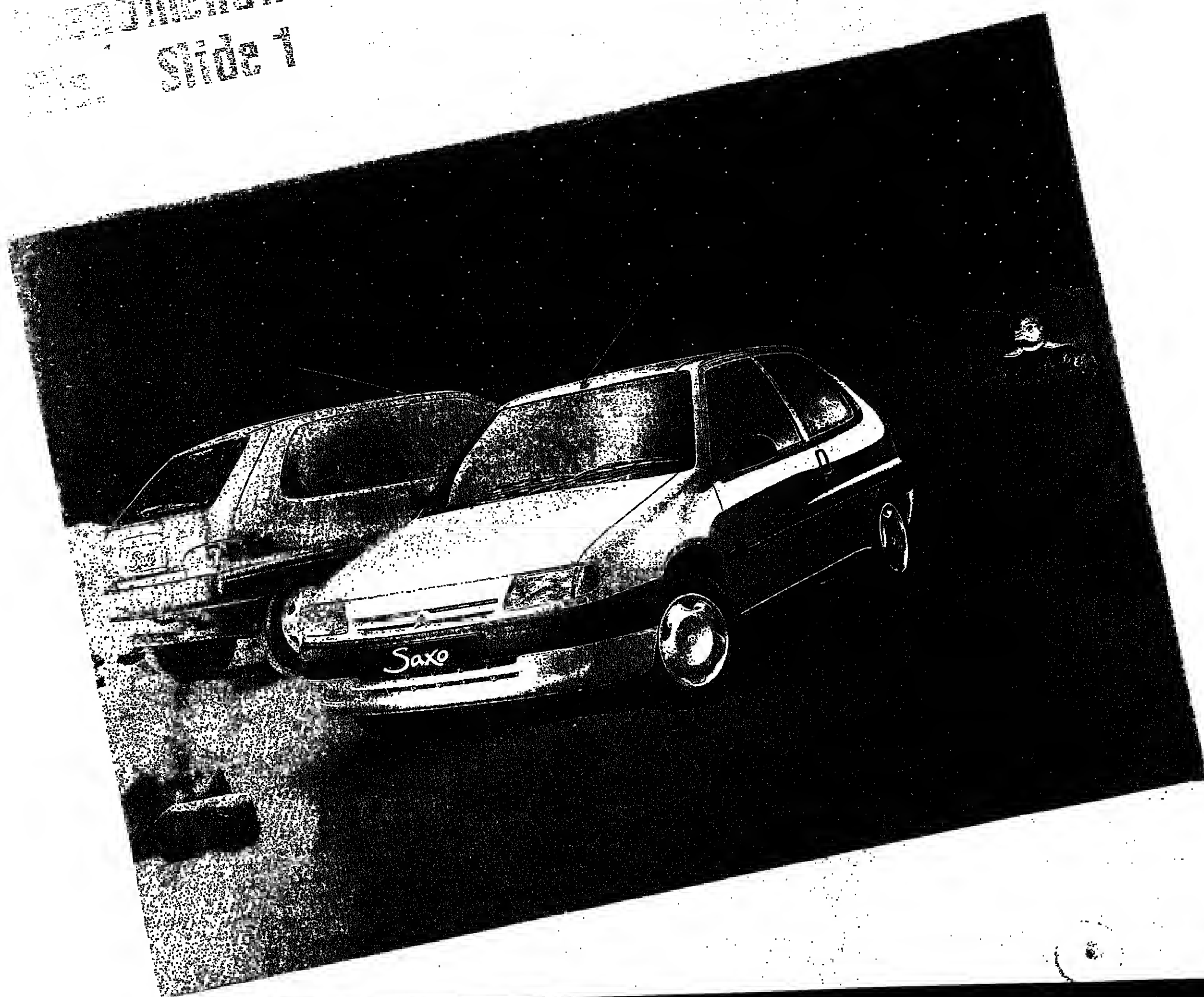
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Bishops debate ordination of gay clergy

The Church of England synod debate on homosexuality is likely to be a troubled one

Kathy Marks

In what promises to be the most explosive debate since the ordination of women priests, the Church of England General Synod will today wrestle for the first time in 10 years with the question of its attitude towards homosexual clergy.

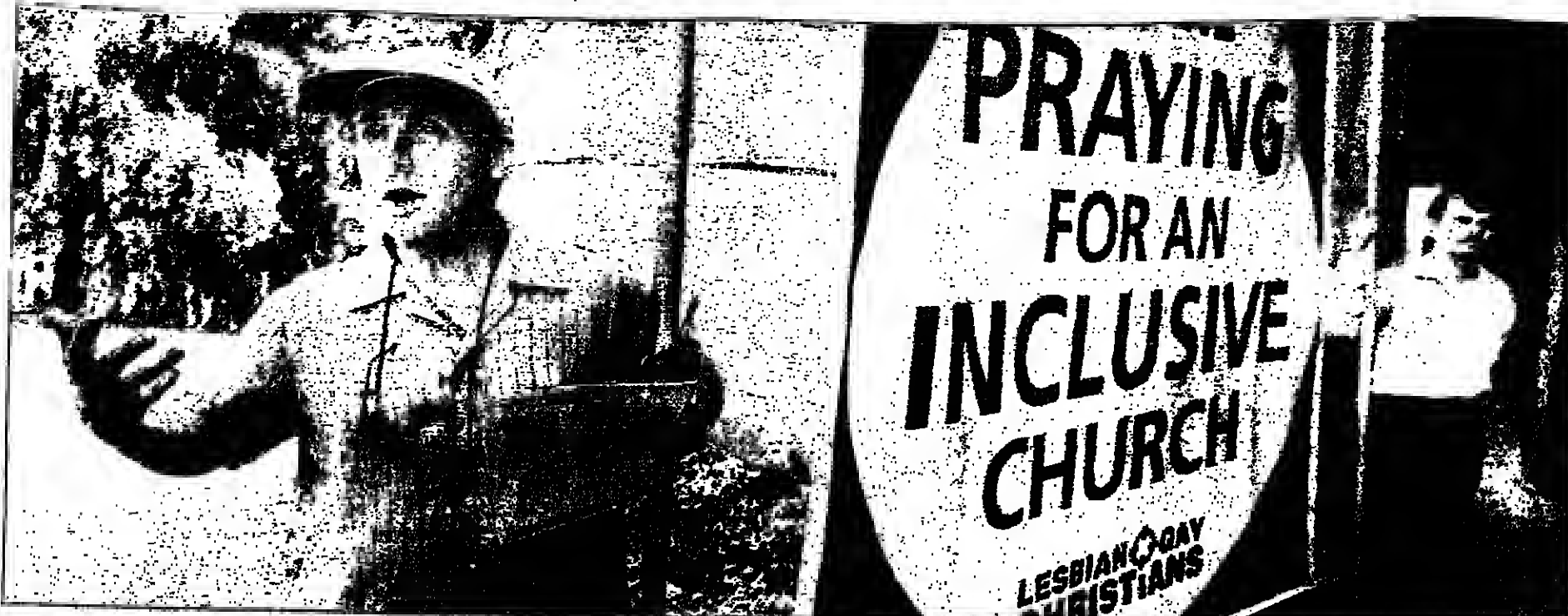
The issue will expose bitter divisions between the Church's liberal and evangelical wings. The demands of the gay lobby have been fuelled by a survey released yesterday which alleged that many Anglican bishops flout their own ban on homosexual priests.

The prospect of agonising in the public gaze about this most difficult of theological dilemmas is not one that senior Church leaders relish. But the debate has been forced upon them by the tabling of a private member's motion calling for further discussion of a document issued by bishops in 1991.

The document, *Issues in Human Sexuality*, concluded that while practising homosexuals were acceptable as Church lay members, they could not be tolerated within the priesthood.

It was an uncomfortable compromise that satisfied none of the parties, and has since been dismissed as inconsistent.

While traditionalists have tabled an amendment in today's motion calling on the Synod to reaffirm its opposition to any sexual relations outside het-



Angry voices: Richard Kirker (left), general secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, protesting in York yesterday. A report by the movement alleged that many Anglican bishops flout their own ban on homosexual priests.

Photograph: Steve Forrest/Guzelian

stance. But Dr George Carey, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, takes a hardline view. Today's motion, tabled by the Venerable David Gerrard, the Archdeacon of Wandsworth, sounds superficially innocuous. It calls on the Synod to "commend" the 1991 report for discussion in dioceses and to acknowledge that it is "not the last word on the subject".

Some would prefer that the issue remained in the closet. The Rev Tony Highton, a leading evangelical vicar and architect of the 1987 motion, said he had mixed feelings about the debate. "I think many of us wish it were not taking place," he said. "I think it could be very damaging for the Church to be seen to be dallying with the sin of homosexual practice."

erosexual marriage, supporters of gay rights claimed yesterday that the survey was powerful ammunition for their cause.

The poll of 1,000 clergy, conducted by the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, reportedly found that 21 serving bishops have knowingly ordained, licensed or employed practising homosexuals. Campaigners have not identified the bishops, but say they include vocal opponents of gay priests.

Richard Kirker, secretary of the movement, which staged a demonstration outside the Synod yesterday, said that the findings exposed the hypocrisy at the heart of Church policy. "These bishops should have the courage of their convictions and own up publicly to what they are privately prepared to do," he said.

The Right Rev Richard Harries, Bishop of Oxford, admitted that the survey was "embarrassing" for the House

of Bishops, but said he thought it unlikely that any ordinations had been conducted after the 1991 guidelines were issued.

The Synod last debated gay priests in 1987, when it overwhelmingly approved a motion stating that "homosexual gen-

ital acts" fall short of Christian ideals and require repentance. Since then, Lord Runcie, the former Archbishop of Canter-

bury, has admitted that he ordained practising homosexuals and senior clergy have spoken out in favour of a more liberal

Age limit for cigarette sales may rise to 18

Kim Sengupta

Concern about increasing numbers of teenagers, especially girls, smoking has prompted the Government to consider raising the age limit at which cigarettes can be bought from 16 to 18.

Other proposals likely to be studied include an American-style ban on smoking in public places, and an increase on the £2,000 maximum fine for shopkeepers selling tobacco to under-16s.

The new drive comes amid evidence that the tobacco industry, hit by litigation from smokers in the United States, is having success in attracting a new generation of smokers, especially female, in Britain.

An anti-smoking seminar, "Dying for a Fag", to be hosted today in London by the Department of Health, will be the forum to discuss various proposed curbs. The meeting will be addressed by Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, and Essex Jowell, the Minister for Public Health, as well as experts from across the world, and representatives from sports, arts, business and healthcare.

As a backbencher Ms Jowell introduced a Bill in 1994 to outlaw smoking in public places. However, she is now believed to favour allowing time for pubs, restaurants, hotels and businesses to ban smoking before legislating.

Among those not invited to the seminar are tobacco firms. The industry's umbrella group, the Tobacco Manufacturers' Association, rejected the proposal for a projected higher age limit, saying: "you can get married at 16 and join the army at 17".

But this is not a universal view in the cigarette manufacturing business. BAT Industries, formerly British American Tobacco, supports reform. Brendan Brady, the company's head of issues management, said: "We would support measures to allow sales only at 18."

The TMA funds campaigns to stop shopkeepers from selling cigarettes to children. But it acknowledges that about £100m worth of cigarettes is sold to under-16s each year.

The Portman Group, which represents the drinks industry, has called for a "proof of age" card for 18-year-olds allowing them to buy alcohol. Similar cards may be introduced for tobacco purchase by 16-year-olds even if the age limit is not immediately raised.

Previous governments had set a target of cutting the proportion of children who smoke to 6 per cent by 1994. But the latest surveys suggest 13 per cent of girls and 10 per cent of boys in the 11-to-15 age group smoke.

The ideas discussed at today's forum are expected to influence a government White Paper due to be published in October.

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news

Faiths unite to fight gene patenting

Clare Garner and
Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Fears that a new European law will effectively enable companies to patent the building blocks of life have led Christian and Jewish leaders to unite in a campaign today.

In a letter to *The Independent*, the Rt Rev Richard Harries, the Bishop of Oxford, links up with Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, and Keith Patrick O'Brien, the Archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh, among others.

They are protesting at a European directive, known as the "Life Patent Directive", which is

and animals, and of "spare parts" of humans. An American company, Biocyte, has already been given a patent on blood cells from umbilical cords, which can be used to treat diseased bone marrow.

And the patenting of the breast cancer gene, BRCA1, has also attracted controversy. The American company which patented it said it would only charge for tests for the gene, rather than research. But scientists are still unhappy about the principle and a number plan to oppose the proposed directive.

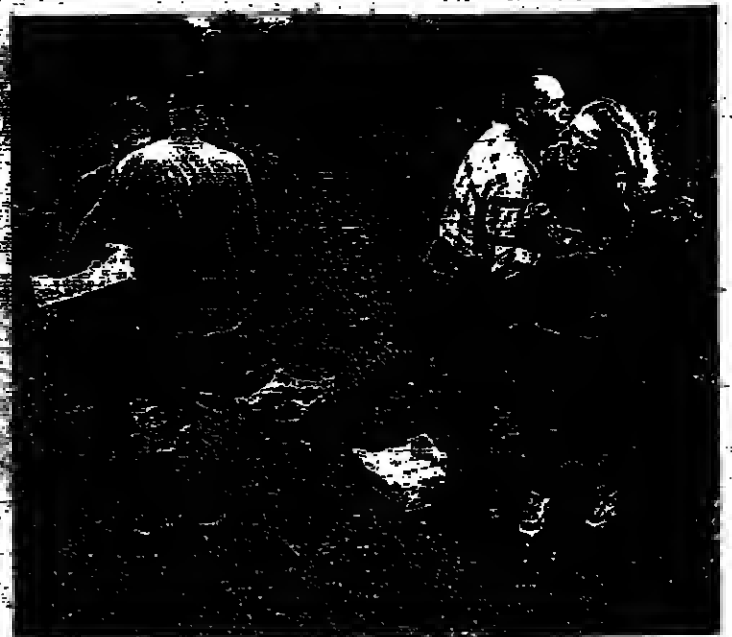
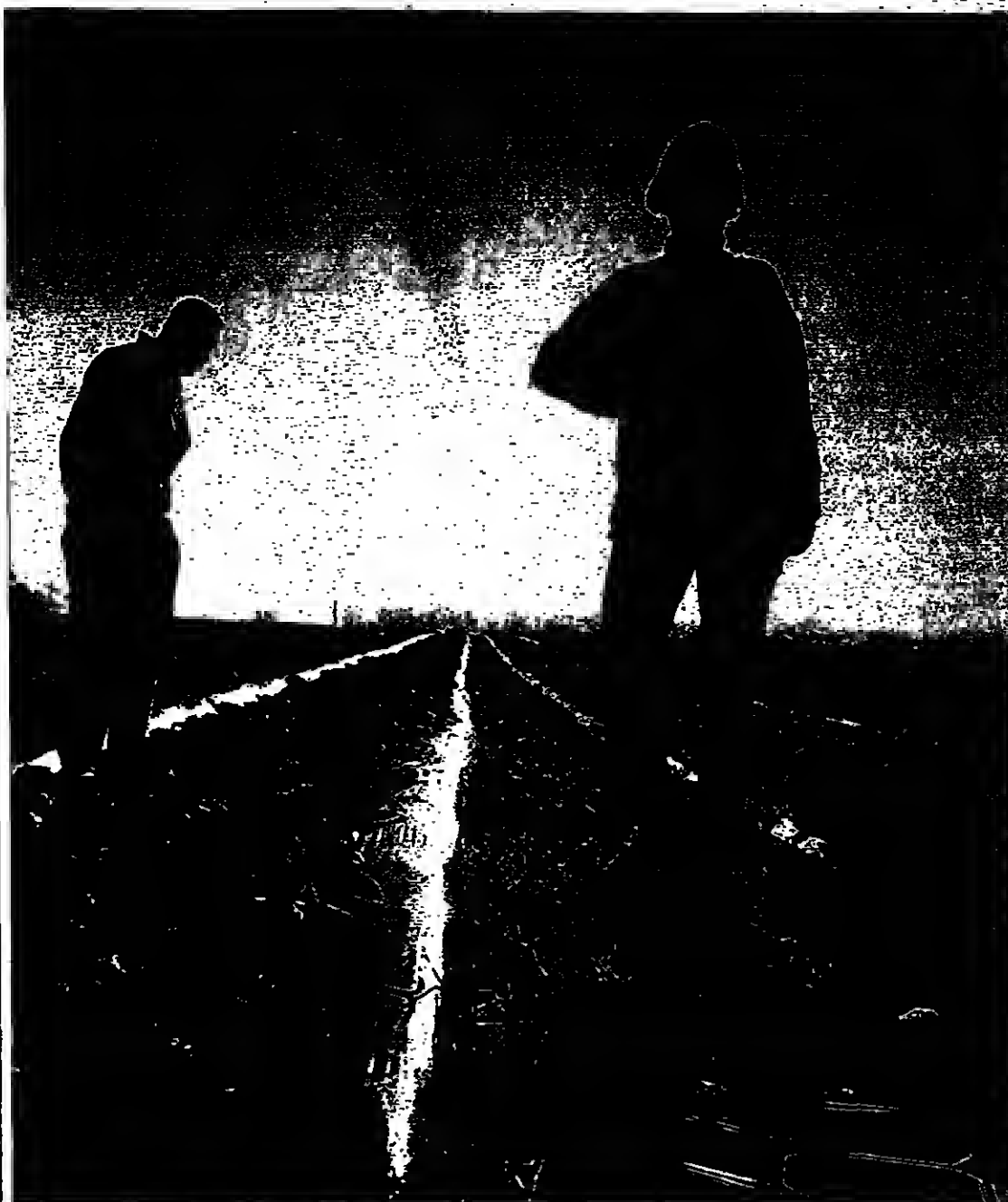
In a letter to John Battle, the UK energy and industry minister, the religious groups write that the directive, if passed, would "give industry explicit rights to life patenting, and therefore the right to monopolise the commercial exploitation of lifeforms".

They add: "If this directive were passed, merely extracting and describing a gene would entitle a company to patent, allowing them not only a monopoly control over the procedure but over the genes themselves, thus crediting them with all future unforeseen developments and applications of that basic discovery."

This, they claim, could lead to increased treatment costs and a financially-exclusive health service, while channelling research away from unprofitable areas which have a public benefit.

The Department of Trade and Industry insisted last week that the proposed directive would not change UK patent law. Mr Battle said: "Biotechnology is already driving the medicines of the future - it will be key to national well-being and quality of life." He added: "The longer this debate drags on, the greater the risk that the UK biotechnology scientists and companies at the forefront of medical research will move to the US."

The Government had pinned its hopes on a "new mood" after tens of thousands



Why migrant workers are happy with meagre fruits of their labours

Kate Watson-Smyth

Their day begins with a wake-up call at 5.55am and by 6am they are out in the fields for the start of a 16-hour day picking strawberries.

The work is back-breaking and poorly-paid, but these Eastern European students are flocking to Herefordshire to work on the fruit farms.

Farmers are finding it more and more difficult to find enough British students prepared to work the long hours to enable them to get their fruit picked and onto the supermarket shelves while it is still fresh.

But over the last five years there has been a large increase in the number of Eastern Europeans who are willing to help out and earn some money towards their studies.

The workers can earn a high of around £200 a week, while £70 is a not uncommon low. Some will be found sharing small touring caravans for around £8 a week.

In 1996 there were 4,500 visas allocated to non-European students and this year the number has increased to 10,000 and they have become an essential part of the seasonal work force.

Photographs: Chris Smart

'Industry will monopolise the exploitation of life'

Letters, page 14

being presented to the European Parliament this week. The religious leaders say that the directive contains "disturbing ethical, social, environmental and political issues" and that if it passed, the cost of treating patients would increase.

The directive is due to appear before the European Parliament on Tuesday, with a deciding vote expected on Wednesday. It aims to harmonise the differing patent laws in member states of the European Union, by allowing companies and organisations to patent genes or collections of genes, as well as genetically-engineered plants and animals.

But it has aroused strong feelings, because it appears to allow the patenting of existing plants

Ceasefire calls are 'wishful thinking'

Jojo Moyes

Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, yesterday renewed her plea to the IRA to call a new ceasefire following another night of violence which Ulster Unionists said proved the Government was engaged in "wishful thinking".

Ms Mowlam said the terrorists must declare an "unequivocal ceasefire" or Sinn Féin would be left behind in the attempts to reach a political settlement.

The Government had pinned its hopes on a "new mood" after tens of thousands

of Orangemen paraded without confrontation. But over the weekend petrol-bombs were thrown and several Royal Ulster Constabulary officers were wounded during rioting in Londonderry and Belfast.

The renewed violence confirmed Unionist beliefs that a new ceasefire is unlikely and that Sinn Féin should not be allowed to enter the multi-party talks. The Ulster Unionist leader, David Trimble, yesterday called for an end to what he called "wishful thinking".

"There are too many people still engaged in wishful thinking and the consequences of

their wishful thinking are likely to be very bad for this community," he told BBC's *Breakfast with Frost*.

He warned that some Unionists believed the Government's agenda was simply to get Sinn Féin into the multi-party talks.

John Hume, leader of the nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party, accused Mr Trimble of being "negative", although he agreed that Sinn Féin had to commit itself to peaceful means to gain entry to the Stormont talks.

He urged the IRA to call a total end to its campaign of violence. And he praised the

"moral courage" of Ulster Orangemen for re-routing or calling off marches this weekend. "It was a very praiseworthy decision and I think it enormously improved the atmosphere in the communities involved," he said.

Ms Mowlam accepted that Mr Trimble would find it hard to conceive of a ceasefire.

"Let us just deal step-by-step with where we're going. Let's make sure we have a political process to offer the people of Northern Ireland that the constitutional parties are engaged in," she said. "And let the IRA, Sinn Féin, make their decision."

The ball's in their court. We can't decide for them."

Yesterday the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, urged Sinn Féin to "opt for hope" by responding to the Orangemen's action. Substantive talks are due to begin in September, and the Government has made clear that any ceasefire must last at least six weeks and has to be genuine "by word and deed".

Ms Mowlam drew hope from the possibility of agreement on the issue of decommissioning when the multi-party talks begin again tomorrow. She said the "good news"

was that the parties currently engaged in the talks had agreed a timetable for the issue to be determined.

"What's important is that the peace process itself gets in gear and people see some momentum being reached by that," Ms Mowlam told Sky's *Sunday* programme with Adam Boulton.

Security forces last night found several hundred pounds of explosives on the nationalist Creggan Estate in Londonderry. The explosives were hidden in a coal shed and wrapped in plastic bags. Houses in the area were evacuated by police.

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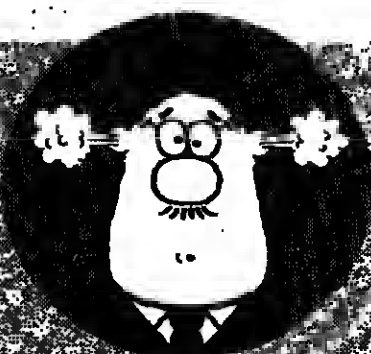
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Revenue

هكذا من الأصل

Jacko's fans are not so thrilled, now they've seen how bad he can be

David Lister
Arts News Editor

It happened to the England football team in its darker days. But it has never happened to rock superstar Michael Jackson until last weekend.

Newspaper adverts advised fans that they could buy tickets on the days, no need to book in advance, just turn up (fittingly enough) at turnstile 1.

In the event, 60,000 fans came to his first show for five years, almost 20,000 short of capacity. In the music industry there's long been a saying: "There's music, there's rock'n'roll and there's Michael Jackson."

base. In France his shows have been moved to smaller venues following diminishing interest. And Jackson has studiously avoided touring America since the child abuse allegations, which seemed to cause greater damage to his popularity there than here.

Mat Snow, editor of the rock magazine *Mojo* said yesterday: "The fall in his record sales in America has been catastrophic. There have been fears that his latest album, *Blood On The Dance Floor*, may not even sell one million copies there. In Britain there has been more cynicism about the allegations. And it is significant that Jackson is touring here but hasn't played in his home country yet."

The album is selling better here but will not begin to dent the sales of his Eighties albums *Thriller*, *Bad*, and *Dangerous*. *Thriller* sold 45 million world-wide.

Jackson's latest £16m show is the usual mixture of extravaganzas and wackiness. He appears inside a rocket dressed as an android in a gold space suit and stared at the audience for a full five minutes. Over the next two hours of hits, Jackson boards a crane that lifts him over the audience's heads and returns him to the stage as flames shoot up in front of the crowd. A full-sized tank also makes an entrance at one point, before Jackson is eventually helicoptered away to Paris to see his son, Prince.

Mat Snow, who was at Saturday's show, said: "Among the audience there was a certain kind of camp revelling in the whole pop Babylonism of it all. You got a thrill from the overweening vulgarity. He is a great dancer though he paces himself more now as he approaches his 39th birthday."

"But there was a large number of kids at the concert, family groups, with seven- and eight-year-olds. Either those people have not been reading the papers, or they have set aside their scruples or they

simply don't believe the stories they have read.

"If his audiences are down it's partly because he hasn't had an album of wholly original music since 1991 and partly because people feel that they know his show."

"But it's also because some people too feel a little bit queasy about the allegations and don't want to go to great expense to see him."

Of the expense there is no doubt. Pop fans are seldom well treated in the amounts of money they have to pay. For Jackson, Wembley tickets are £26.75, with a £3.25 booking fee - well over 10 per cent.



Pop idol: Michael Jackson fans at Wembley Stadium yesterday, where tickets were available at the turnstiles

Photograph: Tony Buckingham

Jackson: The history

Police charges of child abuse collapsed in 1995 when Jackson made a £21m settlement with 14-year-old Jordy Chandler, who then refused to testify.

Drinks giant Pepsi removed its £35m sponsorship from Jackson's *Dangerous* tour after he admitted being addicted to painkillers.

Jackson's *Thriller* album is the biggest-selling record ever, at 45 million copies but his *HIStory* [sic] double-album gold only 10 million copies and dropped out of the top 20 after two months.

Jackson has announced plans to build a £100m Disney-style theme park in Poland, and another in Rome with an international airport that would create 2000 jobs.

Steven Wootton

But the man who famously scaled new heights in choreographed stadium rock shows appears to be on the wane - and industry observers are asking whether the last five years of child abuse allegations, a public relations disaster marriage to Lisa Marie Presley and rumours of artificial insemination to give him a son, have damaged his fan

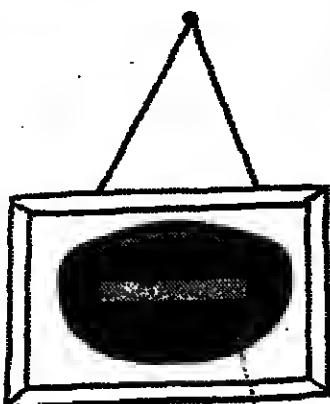
DAILY POEM

Towards Arras

By Jeremy Hooker

From Picardy and the land of the Somme
the late summer sky had lowered,
became a roof of dark blue cloud.
And it broke in downpour, shattering
on roadside memorials and regiments of graves,
smoking across the fields:
the mounds and ditches, that already
after seventy years, look prehistoric.
And as we drove towards Arras,
slowly, against the pounding
and blinding cloudburst,
I thought of Edward Thomas
and how he would have loved
the violence of this passing storm.

This poem comes from Jeremy Hooker's new collection *Our Lady of Europe*, which connects places in Europe - and their history of violence - with natural and mythical forces that underlie the continent's culture. *Our Lady of Europe* is published (£8.95) by Enitharmoo Press at 36 St George's Ave, London N7 0HD



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Parliament misled over Hawk sales

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

The Conservative government misled Parliament over the export of Hawk jets worth £300m to Indonesia, it has been revealed.

The disclosure means that a decision on whether to allow new exports, expected to test Robin Cook's new ethical foreign policy, may not now have to be made in the near future. An announcement had been expected within the next few

weeks on whether a new co-signment of 16 fighter aircraft would be allowed to go ahead. It now appears that Ian Lang, the former President of the Board of Trade, authorised the exports last November.

Campaigners have argued that Britain should not sell arms to the Suharto regime, claiming that they have been used to attack civilians in occupied East Timor. They say Indonesia has one of the world's worst human rights records. Barbara Roche, the Trade

minister, said in answer to a parliamentary question on Friday that Mr Lang had been "wrongly advised" last November when he said that licences for 16 further Hawk jets fulfilled a contract drawn up in 1993. In fact the 24 jets sold in 1993 had already been given licences and Mr Lang was licensing a further 16 jets sold in 1996.

The mistake appears to mean that Mr Cook has no imminent decision to make on the export of Hawk jets to Indonesia. Ministers are at present drawing up

new criteria designed to cover the export of arms to repressive regimes, which are expected to centre on the likelihood of them being used against dissidents or civilians.

Government sources have been reported as saying that no satisfactory evidence has been produced that the jets have been used in East Timor. They also said that they will not revoke existing export licences because to do so would mean paying compensation to manufacturers. Yesterday Barry Coates,

director of the World Development Movement, said the revelation had proved fortunate for Mr Cook. "The first test of the new ethical foreign policy is not immediate now, but we don't think that ought to let the Foreign Office off the hook. We want a clear statement to say, in future, orders like this would not be permitted," he said.

The criteria being set were unfair because it was almost impossible to prove the Hawks were being used in East Timor, he added. The aircraft were

designed for stealth and, even if they were photographed, it would be impossible to prove where they were. Large numbers of eye-witness accounts should be enough to prevent any more exports.

A legal opinion prepared for WDM by Bindman and Co says the Government would not have to pay compensation if it revoked the licences because of a catch-all clause allowing them to be cancelled at any time. Menzies Campbell, the Liberal Democrat defence spokes-

man, has asked Robin Cook to cancel invitations to three senior Indonesian military officials to come to the Farnborough defence show in September.

"Withdrawing such invitations and cancelling export licences would show the Government is serious," he said.

An spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry said: "A mistake was made and the House was misinformed, so we took the opportunity to correct the situation. We got this wrong."



Cook: off the hook on ethics

Sunny outlook for New Labour's council house of the future

Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

The New Labour council house of the future will have large south-facing windows in an attempt to pick up as much sunshine – and so-called "passive" solar heating – as possible.

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, wants to use the £900m Budget bonus for local housing projects that will provide a focus for policy on employment, law and order, transport, and energy efficiency. But it appears solar heating has already been ruled out as too costly.

John Battle, the energy minister, told Greenpeace last week that cladding the roof of a house with solar panels could cost more than £10,000, with the electricity costing up to six times more than conventional power.

"My personal view," he said, "is that it would probably be more cost-effective in a large housing programme to ensure that it includes the maximum possible level of passive solar features [eg houses facing south, with big windows on that side, guided natural ventilation, high levels of insulation], since these would not add a great deal to the built cost and could bring significant benefits both to the inhabitants and ultimately to the environment at large."

An example of the type of housing ministers seem to have in mind is the award-winning redevelopment of council blocks in Hulme, Manchester. Mr Battle says Mr Prescott's Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions will be offering guidance to councils on energy use in the new housing schemes. But it would appear Mr Prescott plans to use the new housing to produce a living example of New



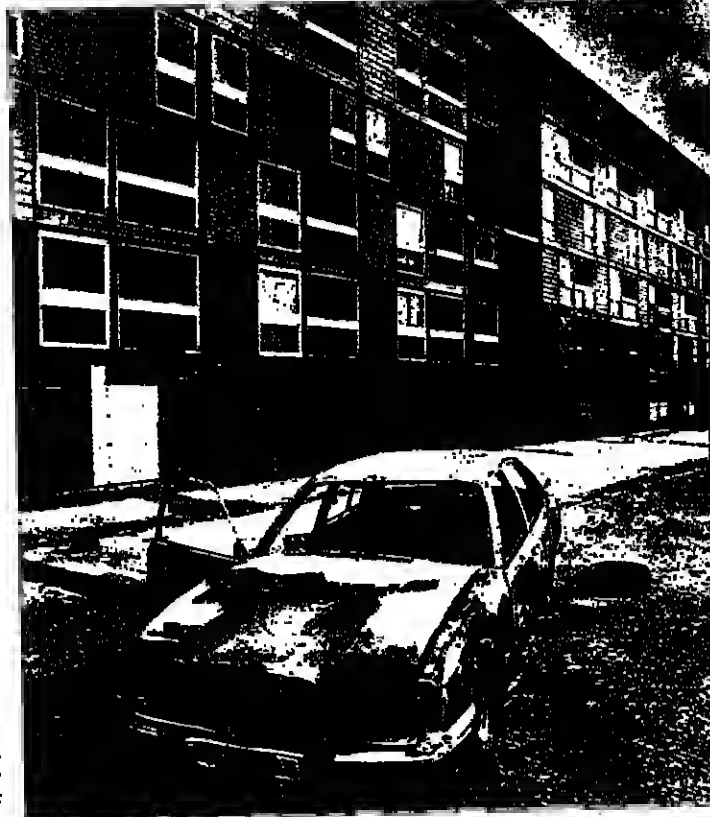
Labour at work. In his Budget, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, released £200m of councils' £5bn capital receipts for housing projects this year, with another £700m instalment next year.

The carve-up of that cash could mean an extra £6m for Birmingham, with £3m for Manchester, Leeds, Hackney, Islington, Lambeth, and Southwark, with even southern towns like Welwyn Hatfield and High Wycombe getting more than £500,000 this year.

What has not been formally announced is that Mr Prescott wants to exploit the new housing budget to encourage councils to design and build new-style estates that help to stimulate private investment and employment, to curb crime and vandalism, and encourage the use of public transport, as well as generating energy efficiency.

A consultation paper says: "The Government accepts that in many cases a programme restricted solely to physical improvements and development will not result in long-term and sustainable change and that associated projects will also be necessary, for example, to reduce crime and vandalism on estates or improve the ability of residents to get jobs."

But ministers are willing to dedicate 15 per cent of the extra money to such regeneration work, provided that it directly benefits the people living on the new estates.



Then and now: Hulme estate, Manchester (left) in the bad old days and reborn (above) as winner of the 1997 Housing Design award
Photographs: Alistair Berg/Phil Sayer

'Hello dishwasher – I'm on the train and I'll be home soon'

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The home of the future, in which the oven, video recorder, lights and central heating can all be controlled remotely – even from a mobile phone – has come a step closer with the invention of a crucial component: the plug.

This, however, is not just any plug. Designed by the Dutch electronics giant Philips, it is able to send and receive data over the mains network, meaning that it can communicate between microprocessors in appliances such as washing machines and computers.

The "home appliance modem" has been taken up by a French company, which is using

it in window shutters which can be electrically operated opened or closed from any part of the house.

But Philips anticipates that the modem, similar to that already used by computers, will be incorporated into a much wider range of appliances within a few years. "It can both send and receive information – both are built into the chip," said Jonathan Woodcock, a marketing director at Philips.

The modem communicates by adding high-frequency signals, just 1 volt in strength, to the existing mains voltage – 240 volts in Britain. A growing number of modern home appliances, including VCRs, TVs, dishwashers, cookers, burglar alarms and central

heating systems are built around microprocessors. By enabling these to send and receive data over their mains cable, the homeowner would be able, for example, to set the dishwasher running and turn the oven on, with instructions punched in from a mobile phone while on the way home.

Security could be ensured by giving every home's system a PIN code, as used for bank cards. And there would be no risk that signals sent around one person's home might travel over the mains to switch on the oven in their neighbour's house, as Mr Woodcock explained: "Every mains source has a large coil, used to measure the flow – and that... acts to stop the signal passing beyond that point."

Widdecombe spoke for 'killer'

Kim Sengupta

Ann Widdecombe intervened on behalf of a convicted killer after she became concerned about a possible miscarriage of justice while she was Conservative prisons minister.

She took an interest in the case of Raphael Rowe, serving a life sentence for a murder and robberies committed by the so-called M25 gang, after she was approached by him while on an official visit to Maidstone prison in Kent.

The campaign to review the case of Rowe, 29, and two others convicted with him, Michael Davis, 30, and Randolph John-

son, 32, has gathered the support of a cross-party group of MPs. The case is also due to be highlighted to BBC TV's *Rough Justice* programme.

Ms Widdecombe's action led to the Home Office promising that a review of the M25 case would not be delayed by the papers being passed on to the newly formed Criminal Cases Review Commission – only for the department's pledge to be broken by her boss, Michael Howard, the Home Secretary.

In a letter to his then shadow, Jack Straw, on 28 February this year, Mr Howard wrote: "... In view of earlier delays in Mr Rowe's case, he has been given

an undertaking that a decision will be taken on his representations before responsibility for reviewing allegations of a wrongful conviction is handed over to the Criminal Cases Review Commission on 31 March."

Yet on 10 April the files on Rowe, and two other men convicted with him for murder and armed robberies committed by the M25 gang, were passed on to the CCR, as were other controversial convictions including that of James Hanratty.

This led to accusations that Mr Howard did not wish to have to admit embarrassing miscarriages of justice with the election coming up.

Ms Widdecombe subsequently clashed with Mr Howard over the sacking of Derek Lewis, Director General of the Prisons Service, accusing the former Home Secretary of having "something of the night" about him.

The campaign for a review of the case against Rowe, Davis and Johnson is being backed by a number of other MPs including Labour's Chris Mullin, about to take on the chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee.

Ms Widdecombe said: "I represented Raphael Rowe in my capacity as a constituency MP. It looks as if we will now have to wait for the review. That is all I can say at the moment."

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

Lord Simon of Highbury and Canonbury, the former BP chairman now a junior minister, answered a question in the House of Lords relating to chemicals, despite the fact that he is supposed to avoid matters that might relate to his former company.

Lord Simon has refused to give up his £2.15m shareholding in BP despite pressure from the Conservatives, who argue that it contravenes procedures governing conflicts of interest over ministers. While the newly created peer has put his other shareholdings in a blind trust,

he has refused to do so with his BP holding.

Last month, Lord Simon was asked by the Countess of Mar about the purposes of various chemicals and he refused to provide a full answer, saying that "to provide the detailed information required... would require extensive research and agreement of commercial parties and would incur disproportionate costs". BP has a large involvement in the chemicals industry.

In an answer to Michael Fallon, Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, conceded that Lord Simon will continue to see papers dealing with the energy industry. She

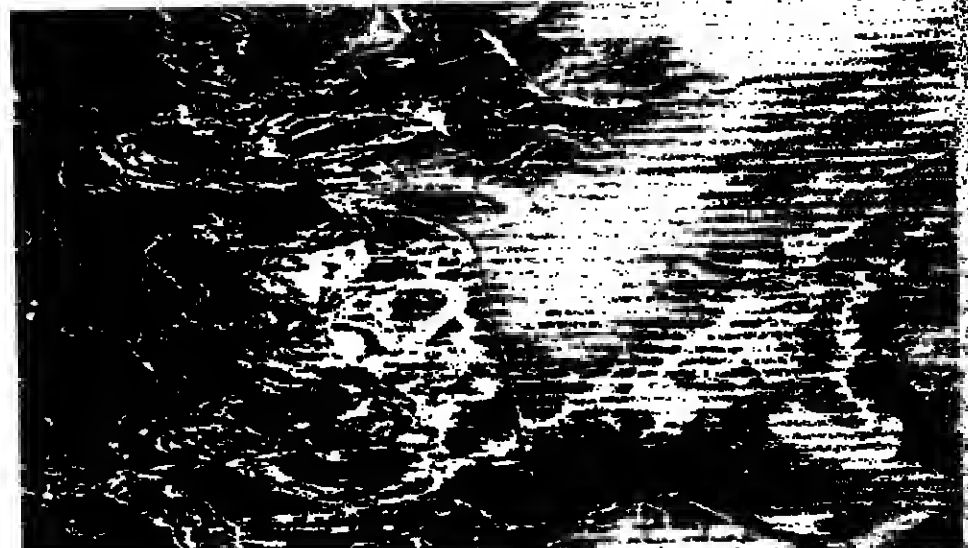
told Mr Fallon that while Lord Simon does not routinely attend meetings concerning energy issues, "he is only barred from seeing papers, including papers on energy issues (or attending meetings) which have a bearing on BP".

John Redwood, the shadow President of the Board of Trade, said: "This seems to be rather like saying that you're going to read *Hamlet* but not the bits about the Prince. The more answers we get about this issue, the more inconsistencies they show up."

Mrs Beckett has also explained to Mr Redwood that when she was first asked about Lord Simon's position in Par-

liament, she had been confused. She said: "While I was aware that my noble friend had taken action to preclude any potential conflict of interest, I was unable on the spur of the moment to recall whether any detailed aspects of these steps remained to be completed."

In a separate development, Nigel Griffiths, the consumer affairs minister, has had to step down from any involvement in the inquiry by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the travel industry. This follows Mr Griffiths' stated view that Lunn Poly, the Thomson-owned travel agency, should be forced to change its name to Thomson.



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Abuse of South African children 'is rite of passage' in world's most violent society

Nightmare of child rape in the townships

Mary Braid
Johannesburg

They threw bones, muttered prayers and did mystical dances, cheered on by a 5,000-strong crowd at Kaitshong township's sports stadium, near Johannesburg. The arrival of the witchdoctors and beaded sangomas – traditional healers – was a sign of desperation in the search for Mmamokgethi Malebani, a seven-year-old girl who disappeared in March, the day before she was due to testify against a man who allegedly raped her. She has not been seen since; her mother Joyce, 25, is distraught.

Mrs Malebani, a Christian, had misgivings about her community's insistence last week that sangomas be called in. But police inquiries have yielded nothing. Without Mmamokgethi, the conviction of the alleged rapist, Dan Mabote, 29, depends on the testimony of two other little girls, aged six and four. "Mmamokgethi is a vital witness," says Inspector Michelle Erasmus.

The authorities have failed to find the girl. The law did not protect her family when it was threatened about giving evidence. Mr Mabote was released on bail, despite police objections. A few days ago another man charged in connection with Mmamokgethi's disappearance was also given bail.

Mmamokgethi's case was not unique. South Africa tops the international league for crimes of violence and nowhere is the general trend more worrying than in child rape. In 1996 more than 30,000 cases of child sex abuse were reported, an increase of 25 per cent on the year before. Reported cases of child rape rose from 10,037 to 13,859 over the same period. South Africa's reported rape rate may now be the highest in the world. Child rapes account for 38 per

cent of all reported rapes. Experts believe only a tiny proportion of child rapes are reported.

Child rape knows no social or racial bar, but its grip most pronounced in the townships, where it is said to be so prevalent as to almost be a rite of passage for girls. "Child rape has reached epidemic proportions," says Sharon Lewis, a psychologist with the University of the Witwatersrand trauma clinic, who studied the experiences of rape victims, aged six to 11, from Soweto. In all but one case, police treated the crime like a mis-



Mmamokgethi Malebani

nor misdemeanour. There was only one conviction. "Often a policeman goes round to arrest a perpetrator and ends up staying for a beer," says Ms Lewis.

"There is a great deal of corruption," women and children, she says, have no social standing. At a policy level child rape is a priority but that does not reach policemen on the ground, struggling to contain the overall explosion in crime. "Violence against children is so widespread it is almost normal and crimes against them are not taken seriously," Marilyn Donaldson, a clinical psychologist who works with children in Alexandra township, outside Johannesburg, argues that even child

rape has to be seen against the background of South Africa's violent past. "The lid was on under apartheid but there was so much violence going on. Now violence seems to be our only way to respond to difficulties."

She cites poverty and overcrowded living conditions in which "boundaries" break down. Apartheid, it is said, robbed men of self-respect. Without the liberation struggle, many men they have no focus. In this bleak situation the weakest are terrorised.

Ms Donaldson said: "There is this attitude that 'I cannot get a job but I can have sex when and where I want it'. The rape of a little child is as close as masturbation as you can get. I have spoken to teenage perpetrators who have absolutely no sense of remorse." In this complicated mix belongs the urban myth that sex with a virgin can cure you of AIDS, which is held responsible by many township mothers for the rise in child rape.

It is impossible to know whether child rape is increasing or whether an epidemic was simply masked by apartheid. But the experts agree that the notion that men can rape children with impunity. Celia Theart, assistant director of the charity Johannesburg Child Welfare, warns that, as in Mmamokgethi's case, child rapists are routinely released on bail and within hours of arrest return to threaten the victim.

Following the sangomas' "visions", police spent days searching local swamps, and houses in distant townships. Some healers said Mmamokgethi was dead, others that she was being held against her will. But by this weekend, the sangomas, like the police, had turned up nothing.

After Mmamokgethi, asks Ms Theart, how can children, and their families, be persuaded to testify in court?



Last resort: Vusi Masondo, a traditional healer, joins the search for Mmamokgethi Malebani, a rape victim who disappeared the day before she was due to testify. Photographs: The Star

significant shorts

Bosnian Serbs mourn war crimes suspect

Bosnian Serbs carrying candles and portraits of Radovan Karadzic yesterday gave a hero's funeral to a war crimes suspect killed resisting arrest by Nato. About 2,000 people attended the funeral of Simo Drljaca, 50, the former police chief of the north-west town of Prijedor. He had been indicted on charges of complicity in genocide for running some of the worst camps for non-Serbs at the start of the Bosnian war in 1992. He was killed resisting British soldiers on Thursday near Prijedor. AP - Pale

Floods kill 28 in Poland

As week-long floods ravaged much of Poland, killing at least 28 people, citizens of Wroclaw who built sandbag barriers through the night appeared yesterday to have saved historic parts of their city. Wroclaw was hit by water surging north along the Odra and Wisla rivers from the heavily flooded south, following days of downpours. However, the university library housing priceless books has been largely rescued from damage. Reuters - Warsaw

Archbishop finds Moi wanting

Anglican Archbishop David Gitari attacked the Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi from the pulpit at Nairobi's All Saints Cathedral at a ceremonial "cleansing" and rededication after last week's riots. Speaking to a packed congregation, which included many opposition figures, Archbishop Gitari said of Mr Moi: "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting." AP - Nairobi

Troops tackle Mob in Naples

The first Italian troops arrived in the southern port of Naples following a government decision to send the army to help quell violence sparked by fighting between mafia clans. About 300 troops arrived to prepare to take up surveillance and security duties in and around the city today. Italy's centre-left government said last Friday it would send 500 soldiers in take over guard duties around Naples, freeing police to focus on halting a wave of mob violence that has swept the city. Reuters - Naples

Spanking good time in sauna

Boris Yeltsin, the Russian President, flogged the Finnish head of state in the sauna yesterday. "I used a Russian birch switch to spank the president very well," Mr Yeltsin told reporters, demonstrating his technique with his right hand. Martti Ahtisaari, the Finnish President, chuckled in response, and shook Mr Yeltsin's hand warmly. Russian bathhouses combine elements of Finnish saunas and Turkish steam baths, and bathers beat each other with birch boughs. Mr Yeltsin, pictured with Mr Ahtisaari, is on holiday at the government resort of Shuiskaya Chupa in Karelia, north of St Petersburg. The region borders on Finland. AP - Shuiskaya Chupa, Russia



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Murder shames and angers the Basques

Heavy clouds hung over the Basque dormitory village of Ermua yesterday, where locals, stricken by the murder of a young conservative councillor by Eta gunmen, walked like zombies in a travesty of their habitual Sunday-morning stroll.

The grim-faced men who held radios pressed to their ears were not this time tuned in to the sport, but to news of when the body of Miguel Angel Blanco would be brought from San Sebastian, where he died of head wounds in the early hours. Only some children, including a couple of little girls with black ribbons in their hair, played in the main square as they do every Sunday.

An elderly lady solemnly watered the geraniums on her balcony. From his iron railings, and from countless little balconies on workers' flats throughout the town, flapped a white sheet draped with black.

Mr Blanco, 29, kidnapped by Eta on Thursday, was found unconscious in a wood on Saturday afternoon with his hands tied and two bullets in his head. He died within hours. He was from a working-class family,

Elizabeth Nash in Ermua finds a village united by grief over Eta's killing of a young councillor



Victim: Miguel Angel Blanco, shot twice in the head

originally from the north-west region of Galicia. He was one of many who had sought a better life in the prosperous Basque country.

Maria Luisa Mandiola, 41, stood outside the town hall where the Spanish and the red-white-and-green Basque flag was just above eye-level, remembered the cheerful young

man who used to play drums in a local band. "They used to play at weddings. I went to the last one just a few weeks ago. The next wedding was to be his own, to his girlfriend Mari-raz." Villagers yesterday swapped their blue ribbons of solidarity for black ones. Pasted on walls and shop windows were posters from the day before: "Miguel, your comrades are waiting for you."

Hundreds of faxes, telegrams and e-mails of sympathy, including one from the Pope, were strung along the walls of the town hall in lines three deep, fluttering like pale mournful bunting.

Some were from town halls throughout Spain, others from individuals. One began "I am an ordinary girl from Barcelona." One was a hand-written poem. An old woman, for whom this was just above eye-level, touched my arm and asked me

to read it out. "I can't bear to see a mother's grief, the tears drying on a father's cheek," I began. She turned away. "I'm crying inside," she said. "All our hundreds of thousands, all our big demonstrations, they didn't do any good."

None the less, Spain has been thrown into a state of rolling demonstrations, involving an unprecedented mobilisation of what seems like the entire people. All eyes are now on this unprepossessing village where Jose Maria Aznar, the Prime Minister, is to attend the funeral today.

In Pamplona, the celebrated San Fermin fiesta came to a halt at the weekend when youngsters who had spent the week running the bulls through the streets tied their scarlet neckerchiefs to the town hall's railings in mourning.

In a rare public display of Eta sympathies, the scarves were set alight, prompting fierce clashes early yesterday morning that were broken up by police. Eighteen people were treated in hospital for injuries.

Political leaders are holding emergency meetings, but their



Sisters in sorrow: Women grieving over the murder of Miguel Angel Blanco. Right: His girlfriend, Mari-raz, being consoled by his father

actions have so far advanced little beyond hand-wringing and appeals for peaceful anti-Eta demonstrations. The Basque regional leader, Jose Antonio Ardanza, expressed the wide-

spread feeling of impotence and frustration: "Eta has laughed at the grief of a defenceless family and all the people," he said. Another leader spoke of "Eta's suicide."

But the organisation has shown before that whatever the level of public support, its infrastructure remains intact and defies ever greater police efforts to destroy it.

FREE: Thai food dish up to the value of £8

The Independent and Independent on Sunday are giving you the opportunity to claim a free Thai food dish up to the value of £8 at a selection of Thai restaurants.

The voucher printed below can be used, per table reservation, to claim a free Thai Dish from the main menu up to the value of £8 at one of 41 participating restaurants. The list of participating restaurants previously published in The Independent and Independent on Sunday on July 12th and 13th, will be printed again in The Independent on Friday 18th July. All the participating restaurants are members of the Thai Restaurant Association (TRA).

HOW TO BOOK

Firstly, phone up the restaurant of your choice from the list previously published and identify yourself as an Independent diner. You will need to check with the individual restaurants for their opening times and pre-booking is essential. Then simply cut out the voucher and take it to the restaurant of your choice and present it at the time of order, indicating either a starter or a main dish from the full priced menu that you wish to claim as your free dish. The vouchers can be used until 31st August 1997.

So, why not bring a spot of Thailand to your palate, whether it's dumplings, intensely flavoured soups, pad Thai, satay, spicy salads, mouthwatering curries or sweet sticky rice! The choice is yours.

TREAT YOURSELF TO SOMETHING EXOTIC

GAJ TOM KA

(Chicken, coconut and galangal soup)

by Elizabeth Nash

Ingredients:

1. 1/2 lb chicken

2. 1/2 lb coconut

3. 1/2 lb galangal

4. 1/2 lb lemongrass

5. 1/2 lb kaffir lime leaves

6. 1/2 lb shallots

7. 1/2 lb garlic

8. 1/2 lb coriander

9. 1/2 lb lime juice

10. 1/2 lb fish sauce

11. 1/2 lb palm sugar

12. 1/2 lb chili

13. 1/2 lb ginger

14. 1/2 lb turmeric

15. 1/2 lb onion

16. 1/2 lb carrot

17. 1/2 lb potato

18. 1/2 lb sweet potato

19. 1/2 lb yam

20. 1/2 lb cassava

21. 1/2 lb taro

22. 1/2 lb lotus root

23. 1/2 lb water chestnut

24. 1/2 lb bean sprout

25. 1/2 lb tofu

26. 1/2 lb egg

27. 1/2 lb chicken

28. 1/2 lb beef

29. 1/2 lb pork

30. 1/2 lb lamb

31. 1/2 lb mutton

32. 1/2 lb goat

33. 1/2 lb venison

34. 1/2 lb bison

35. 1/2 lb elk

36. 1/2 lb moose

37. 1/2 lb caribou

38. 1/2 lb reindeer

39. 1/2 lb musk deer

40. 1/2 lb sambar deer

41. 1/2 lb chital

42. 1/2 lb spotted deer

43. 1/2 lb axis deer

44. 1/2 lb banteng

45. 1/2 lb gaur

46. 1/2 lb kudu

47. 1/2 lb eland

48. 1/2 lb topi

49. 1/2 lb reedbuck

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202. 1/2 lb kudu

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Cambodia's war threatens Angkor Wat

An ancient symbol of peace is being shaken by the barrages fired by Hun Sen's forces

Matthew Chance
Siem Reap

The ancient ruined temples of Angkor Wat looked majestic but deserted yesterday above the thick jungles of north-west Cambodia, as gunfire and the sporadic thuds of exploding artillery rounds shattered their austere calm and threatened the safety of the monuments.

With bursts of rocket barrages, rival government factions and Khmer Rouge guerrillas are locked in a stand-off, driving out the paying visitors that are the lifeblood of Siem Reap.

A solitary line of saffron-clad Buddhist monks padded its way through the gates of the main temple, silent and with heads bowed as they paid homage at a shrine to the Hindu god Vishnu. His formidable stone figure, cut in sandstone by 13th-century masons, looked out on a lush but troubled land.

In Sar Sar Sdan, a few miles west of Angkor's architectural treasures, troops loyal to Hun Sen, Cambodia's power-grabbing leader, sat poring over a torn map of the region.

Bare-chested, and inhaling deep lungfuls of cigarette smoke, one soldier gave the order to fire with a nonchalant wave of his hand: a deadly barrage of screeching Katushka rockets sent sonic shock waves through the air before thundering explosions confirm hits in the rice paddies and jungles beyond the horizon.

Since Hun Sen staged his bloody takeover in the capital, Phnom Penh, last week, more than 150 people have been killed, marking a tragic return to the old alliances that dragged Cambodia through a decade of brutal conflict in the 1980s.

Hun Sen yesterday called on all sides to unite and hold free and fair elections to avoid war. But as he spoke, his Chinese-made tanks and Russian rocket launchers were again turned on the forces of Funcinpec, the royalist political party led by the ousted co-premier, Prince Norodom Ranariddh.



Troubled land: A soldier, left, loyal to Hun Sen, in pursuit of retreating Funcinpec forces. Right, Buddhist monks making their way to pray in the Angkor Wat temple complex. Photographs: Philip Blekensop/Reuters

As in the 1980s, the royalists have formed an alliance with the hated Khmer Rouge, which, perhaps, is their only military option.

But the partnership is heavily out-gunned. Defected Khmer Rouge leaders, who control about 10,000 well-trained men, have stayed neutral in the conflict - for the moment. What remains of the brutal, hardline Khmer Rouge is no match for the might of Hun Sen's numerous tanks, helicopter gunships and heavy guns.

In a move to crush his opponents, Hun Sen has deployed a 2,000-strong force in Siem Reap to hunt down units resisting his rule. By last night they had pushed the combined forces of Funcinpec and the Khmer Rouge deep into the remote jungles around Angkor Wat.

"Funcinpec have stopped fighting now, they are just running from us. It is only the Khmer Rouge who are putting up any kind of fight," one soldier said.

Hun Sen's army commanders are concerned about the security of Angkor and the lucrative tourist trade. The impact is already being felt by the local residents, who depend on tourism for their livelihoods. Its airport, the main gateway for the thou-

sands of visitors who come to Siem Reap every year to marvel at the splendours of its royal Khmer past, today stands empty of foreigners. They have been evacuated following last

week's fierce fighting. All but a few hotels and restaurants have closed. Even the touts who sell foreigners \$20 (£15) Angkor Wat site passes have abandoned their stamping grounds.

"I am desperate," said Thea Rim, a tour guide and driver who supports his family by showing tourists the archaeological sites. "Now I'm just ferrying soldiers to the frontline in

my car. That hardly pays petrol money."

Four years of relative peace have shown these people that prosperity is attainable. But a climate of uncertainty has

gripped Siem Reap as the prospect of renewed war grows. There is a real fear in the ancient town that the brutal Khmer Rouge may be upon them again. "Are they coming back?" shouted one boy who was certainly too young to remember their rule in 1975. His panicked expression revealing less about his own anxieties than the terror of his elders.

Asia trembles as Japan's air force flies over foreign skies

Richard Lloyd Parry
Tokyo

The former Singaporean prime minister, Lee Kuan Yew, Asia's most forthright statesman, once said why Japan should never again be allowed to send troops overseas. It was like "giving liquor chocolates to a reformed alcoholic".

Today, the theory goes, it might be a peace-keeping operation, tomorrow Japan could be invading, colonising, and pillaging Asia as it did in the Thirties and the Second World War.

Whether or not you believe this, three warplanes of the Air Self Defence Forces (ASDF), as the Japanese air force calls itself, landed in Thailand on Saturday on their first active overseas mission since the end of the Second World War.

Their mission is a humanitarian one: to remain on standby for the possible evacuation of Japanese nationals in Cambodia, should the situation deteriorate.

Nobody believes that the three C-130 Hercules transporters are about to start laying claim to South-east Asia. But the haste with which the operation has been pushed through has upset opposition politicians in Japan, and suggests a willingness on the part of Ryutaro Hashimoto, the Prime Minister, to reassert Japan's dormant military capacity.

The ASDF mission looks as much like a symbolic assertion of will as a practical security measure. As Mr Hashimoto's own diplomats have pointed out, the situation in Cambodia has stabilised since last weekend when a Japanese expatriate engineer became one of 70 people killed during fighting in the capital Phnom Penh.

Residents are freely walking the streets, the international airport has been reopened, and there are empty seats on outward bound commercial flights.

On top of this, the Japanese planes have been dispatched with unusual speed, and with none of the agonised consensus-building that usually accompanies military decisions.

Until 1994, under the "peace" constitution drawn up by the occupying Americans during the post-war period, Japanese forces were barred from going abroad, even on evacuation missions. This law was changed only after long debate, and against the better judgement of many on the Japanese left who firmly hold to the liquor chocolate theory. But when Mr Hashimoto made his decision, he did not see fit even to inform the Social Democratic Party (SDP), his partner in the parliamentary coalition.

"If everything is decided by what the Prime Minister says we will have no use for laws," said the SDP leader, Takako Doi, who complained that, even under the revised law, the mission is illegal.

The amendments passed in 1994 allow for evacuation missions in case of imminent danger to Japanese nationals, but officially the planes which flew out this weekend are "preparing for a possible evacuation". No one even pretends that the danger is pressing; it may be that they will soon fly home again having simply sat on the Thai tarmac for a few days.

But the thought is what counts and, having pulled it off once, Mr Hashimoto will have established an important precedent. Since he became Prime Minister 18 months ago, and in contrast with many of his predecessors, he has established a reputation as a decisive leader, intent on reforming the practices and inhibitions which have prevented Japan from wielding political and diplomatic power in keeping with its economic clout.

While Mr Hashimoto chews his chocolates, Asia will be watching for signs of uprisings.

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arts



These two pictures of Linda Goss are separated by 30 years: one is her now, a teacher wrongfully dismissed, the other is her in 1967, the first English child to train at the Bolshoi. The barre of the Royal Ballet School (right) will not see her again.
Photos: Guy Newman, Herbie Pratt

The ordeal of Linda Goss says a lot about the state of teaching at the Royal Ballet School. Told here by the award-winning novelist and former dancer **Joan Brady**, it is a most disturbing tale

A step in the wrong direction

Last week, a tribunal sat in Croydon to judge a case that shakes the artistic community to its foundations. The critical issue sounded simple: had a classical ballet teacher at the Royal Ballet School been wrongfully dismissed? The tribunal decided that she had. But what really matters is the issue the dismissed teacher saw as underlying her case. She claimed that this hallowed British institution mistreated the children in its care. Further, she claimed that the school sacked her because she objected to this mistreatment—strenuously and over the course of several years.

The teacher's name is Linda Goss. She is no ordinary woman. Her life is as remarkable as her courage; most important to this case, her life makes her uniquely equipped to evaluate the conduct of ballet training in this country.

When Ms Goss was 13 years old—a little girl from Dartmouth in Devon—she travelled to Russia as the only English child ever to be accepted at the Bolshoi Ballet School in Moscow in the great Soviet days. During the course of her training, she shifted her attention from dancing to teaching; as it turned out, she was two more talented in this field. Her gift was so rare that she was asked to teach class in the Bolshoi while she was still no more than a student teacher—a rare honour.

When she graduated, she began a glittering career with ballet schools and companies in England, the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Sweden and other countries. Rudolph Nureyev was an outspoken fan; many

other dancers in many different countries enthusiastically endorse his assessment. No school she worked in has ever had anything but the highest praise for her. She is listed as one of the major teachers of all time in standard works on ballet. Most important, she is adored by virtually every pupil she has ever taught.

In the mid 1980s, she was offered a position at White Lodge, the lower school of the Royal Ballet School, where children from the ages of 11 to 16 are taught. She decided to accept; her parents were no longer young, and she wanted to come home to be near them. But on taking up her post in Richmond Park, she discovered to her horror that the children in her care were subject to treatment reminiscent of Charles Dickens; she saw treatment that was disturbingly harsh, treatment of a kind she had not encountered in any of the many other schools she had served.

These children were badly frightened of members of the ballet staff; they were bullied, publicly humiliated, intimidated. They were overworked; their schedules were so gruelling and their exhaustion so great that injuries were frequent. These injuries were often mocked, belittled, not allowed the rest they needed for recovery.

Ms Goss began at once to campaign for better conditions. She complained to other teachers and members of staff from top to bottom; she complained to several of the governors, and to many other people. Almost everyone agreed with her that something had to be done, but no one—except herself—had the courage to speak out.

However, the Social Services Department

of the London borough of Richmond sent out a questionnaire to parents of pupils as an element of a routine inquiry into conditions at White Lodge, in accordance with the Children Act of 1989. Meantime, the board of governors at the Royal Ballet School commissioned their own report. Both reports, one in September 1995, the other in December 1995, are very carefully worded. Even so, they echoed Ms Goss's concerns.

The governors' report refers to a "consistent noise" within the industry; this "consistent noise" says that the Royal Ballet School "suffers from an intimidating, old-fashioned teaching style and culture that is inhibiting the development of our students, especially at White Lodge". The Social Services report states that there is "strong adverse criticism" from parents of students at White Lodge. It quotes complaints of "draconian methods" of teachers who subject children "to a constant state of psychological abuse", of teachers who are "unapproachable", "secretive", "dismissive", of teachers who "destroy the confidence" of children. If parents complained, they said they were labelled "trouble-makers"; others said they were "scared to rock the boat".

A month after the second report appeared, the Royal Ballet School made Linda Goss redundant. She told the tribunal she was convinced it was because she had spoken out to protect children who could not protect themselves. On this count, the tribunal ruled against her.

Ms Goss's legal costs will run in excess of £17,000. She has known this from the beginning. She has recouped the maximum

statutory amount of £11,300 for wrongful dismissal, but she has no legal aid; she must pay all costs out of her own pocket. Against her, the Royal Ballet School pitted its considerable resources and a formidable legal team. She had no chance of matching them for money or muscle; after the first tedious, inconclusive day of the tribunal, her barrister was already losing heart.

He told her that if she didn't settle for the statutory amount there and then she risked the chance of losing even that. "Linda," he said to her, "you must decide what you really want." She replied, "I want justice for the children."

What she meant was that if she collapsed at so early a stage in the proceedings, what the children faced might well remain hidden from public view. She fought on. British ballet is a bad way. There have been many newspaper articles on the subject recently. Derek Deane cannot find enough English dancers for a production of *Swan Lake*. A high proportion of soloists and principals here are from abroad—Russians, French, Americans. Why? Because UK training is poorer than the training in almost any other country; it produces weak backs, slow footwork, overblown thighs. The methods are out of date and out of touch with techniques and approaches common elsewhere in the world. British ballet desperately needs good teachers.

I went to see graduation day at the Royal Ballet School a few years ago. First



Joan Brady won the Whitbread Book of the Year for her novel, *Theory of War*. Her most recent novel, *Death Comes for Peter Pan* (Minerva, £6.99) was published in May. She is speaking at Ways With Words literary festival at Dartington, sponsored by The Independent on Sunday, Wednesday, at 10am.

tion half way through to dress down one small boy in front of the audience of some 200 people—a graduation day audience of parents, friends, ex-pupils—a bad dressing down too, humiliating, wounding, unnecessary. The child wept.

There is no excuse for this. None. As for Linda Goss, it will take her time to recover from the shock of what happened to her. When she has recovered sufficiently she will take up one of the many posts that have been offered her since her situation became known.

And British ballet? What can it do but continue its downward slide?

Meantime, if you have a child who wants to dance, try schools in another country—almost any other country.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC

Eldar Nebolsin
Wigmore Hall, London

Very occasionally, at the end of a recital, you want to hear more of a pianist—to reveal the unexpected. Eldar Nebolsin left us with one simple, plaintive encore on Friday, Tchaikovsky's *Sweet Dreams*, perfectly chosen after Schumann's ebullient *Carnaval*, and an indelible good-night. This was his British debut, five years after he won the Santander Piano Competition at the age of 18, and three years after his first solo disc of Chopin and Liszt announced an uncommonly stylish and poetic player. He began with Beethoven's first set of Bagatelles, Op. 33, precisely shaded, elegantly relaxed and full of humour.

Humour to Beethoven's *Eroica Variations* is still broader, erupting in the 15th variation in a tremendous cadenza-like display before the fugue, built on the theme's skeletal bass-line. Here Nebolsin was very demonstrative, supplying all the energy that seemed, in the early variations, as if it were bursting for release. What also emerged, though, was a slight tendency to underplay the left hand, as in the canon of the seventh variation, and a taste for polarising dynamic levels, though never with undue violence.

Nebolsin is a lovely pianist to watch, because he's so physically free, sitting quite low,

near the edge of the stool, but without any apparent tension in his shoulders. In quiet music, even his hands seemed scarcely to move. Yet he threw his whole body into the opening fortissimi of *Carnaval*, and when the tempo swished, it took off in a whirl. This was not a performance full of exquisite effects, unduly strained after, but it was youthful, red-blooded and unafraid. The "Sphinxes" were there, in low rumbling tremolos and double octaves, after which "Papillons" was extremely fast and feathery. "Chopin" sang with delicious ease, and the brilliant oomphs, "Pantalone and Colombine" and "Paganini", were sharply athletic. The introduction to the final March hurtled dizzily, matching the opening oomph, and the March itself was thrilling enough to excuse a few dropped stitches at the end.

The evening was in aid of the Ibero-American Benevolent Society, and was sponsored by various banks, Iberia Airlines and *Hello!* magazine. A few of the well-dressed audience might have stepped from its pages. They might also have switched off their mobile phones and sucked some cough drops. The South Bank should hook Nebolsin for its International Piano Series.

Adrian Jack

Tomorrow in the Tabloid

Tom Lubbock on the art of Hiroshige at the Royal Academy

With its extremes of evil and suffering, the story of Beatrice Cenci has a natural appeal for anybody wanting to explore the limits of dramatic experience. Shelley made it the subject of a lengthy tragedy, Artaud made it the starting-point of his Theatre of Cruelty, and now Giorgio Battistelli and Nick Ward, commissioned by Almeida Opera, have used Artaud's version as the basis of an extreme piece of "music drama"—a term that will do as well as any other to describe a project that won't fit any of the usual categories.

Certainly, this isn't a play in the usual sense of the word. With its elided narrative (in brief: Count Cenci murders his sons and rapes his daughter; she kills him and is sentenced to death), and its elusive, declaratory dialogue, *The Cenci* often feels more like a tract or manifesto. Announcing his decision to begin a career of deliberate devotion to vice, for instance, Beatrice's father (jam for lan

MUSIC DRAMA

The Cenci
The Almeida,
London

McDiarmid, always happiest playing somebody really unpleasant) comes up with lines like: "I am a force of nature. For me there is no life, no death, no crime, no law... I seek evil, I perform evil, as a principle, compulsively." The actors' voices are picked up and amplified, faded, echoed, distorted—McDiarmid produces an unsettling range of growls and rasps, as Beatrice (a stately Anastasia Hille) hangs, her whispers of "Father" rattle through the theatre. (All this is achieved through sadly obtrusive headset microphones, making it look

something like *Captain Scarlet* in Renaissance costume.)

The action is complemented, occasionally drowned, by the extraordinary video trickery projected on to the cross-shaped stage and screens behind and to one side. Candles gutter, flames wander in, a feast and then an orgy take place. Lucresia (Kathryn Pogson), Beatrice's mother, kneels in front of her own image—but, as you watch, her face is shattered, distorted, the pieces shuffled crazily.

With this carnival on stage, Battistelli's music (directed by David Parry) is often the least arresting element of the action. Partly that's the sort of music it is, a pattern of broken gestures and abrupt shifts in texture that finally weave into one fuzzy carol of the drama. Battistelli has ended up creating background music. Oddly, the programme credits the drama to "Giorgio Battistelli after An-

tonin Artaud", adding that the text is by Battistelli and Nick Ward and the direction by Nick Ward—which seems like describing *Psycho* as a "a film by Bernard Herrmann, directed by Alfred Hitchcock". It's especially puzzling to anybody familiar with Ward's recent work as playwright and director—there are clear parallels with his production of *The Decameron* last year at the Gate, which evoked the same enthusiasm for mythic, visceral stories and an abandonment of the literary in favour of the sensual.

You have probably gathered that it isn't easy to sum up *The Cenci*—I still don't feel that I have made sense of all the information and ideas it throws at you. It does do what I suppose you require of art—that is, it creates an engrossing and consistent world of its own. Whether it's another masterpiece, I'm not sure.

Further perfs tonight, 19, 20 July

Robert Hanks

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Why Arafat looks so worried

Stock market reporter of the year

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Business news desk: tel 0171-293 2636 fax 0171-293 2098
BUSINESS & CITY EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

PIA to impose £0.5m fine on financial adviser network

Nic Cicutti
Personal Finance Editor

The Personal Investment Authority, the financial services regulator, is set to impose a fine of £500,000 against DBS, a network of independent financial advisers, over alleged pensions mis-selling.

The fine, which is in the final stages of being agreed by senior PIA executives, will be the largest to have been handed out by the regulator for any rule breach. DBS may still appeal against the fine.

Its size, and the issue for which it is being levied, will be a severe embarrassment to Ken Davy, the company's chairman, who sits on the PIA board. Mr Davy, a well-known figure within financial services, is also a past president of the Life Insurance Association, an industry trade body with almost 20,000 members.

The fine also raises fresh questions about the PIA's board, several of whose members have faced similar humiliations in the past few years. They include Alan Daffern, recently retired PIA board member and chief executive at Willis Corroo, whose company was fined last year by Inaro, the fund managers' regulator, also for pensions mis-selling.

A PIA spokeswoman refused to comment. A spokeswoman for DBS said the company knew nothing about the impending fine.

DBS, based in Huddersfield, represents more than 1,700 independent financial advisers throughout the UK. The company, which has a full Stock Exchange listing, is capitalised at more than £100m. Under the network arrangement, advisers join DBS and pay the company a proportion of their commission income.

In return, DBS handles the burden of compliance and regulation, offers training and uses a head office research team to identify suitable products for its members to sell to their clients. The network also negotiates higher commission rates for its members.

The network grew to about 700 member firms by the early 1990s. Since the formation of the Personal Investment Authority in 1994 and the implementation of tighter regulation, DBS has grown to some 1,600 member firms. The company has long prided itself on its stringent selection procedures, which it claims have ensured that potentially bad advisers are refused membership. DBS also operates tight controls on its advisers, requiring them to recommend only products which have been approved by its research team. However, critics have pointed out that many DBS members were recruited at a time when controls were far weaker. In the early 1990s, DBS was mired in a compensation battle with more than 100 elderly home-

Rates 'must reach 10% to level house price inflation'

Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

Interest rates will need to climb to 10 per cent in order to level off house price inflation to an acceptable level, according to research published this morning. The prediction comes amid further evidence of a consumer boom at home and mounting problems for the country's exporters.

Douglas McWilliams, of the Centre for Economics and Business Research, said: "If we have to rely on interest rates alone to level off house price inflation, they will need to climb to 10 per cent." He predicted that the Budget measures to halt booming prices - a reduction in mortgage interest tax relief (MIRAS) and an increase in stamp duty on sales worth more than £250,000 - would have almost no effect on the housing market.

The survey was backed up by research from Dun & Bradstreet, which showed more than half Britain's senior managers expected interest rates to rise

above 7 per cent by the end of the year. A third expected a base rate of 7.5 per cent as growing numbers of retailers forecast increasing sales and higher prices over the next three months.

Professor McWilliams predicted the next Budget would abolish MIRAS, increase stamp duty further and increase council tax in order to nip the housing boom in the bud. The CEBR calculated that Gordon Brown's recent measures would slice a mere £88 off average house prices, currently rising at a rate of £7,000 a year. By contrast, the Bank of England's decision to raise interest rates by a quarter point last week would trim the increase by £228.

After the Bank's announcement, Abbey National and Cheltenham & Gloucester increased their variable mortgage rates by a quarter point, adding more than £7 to the monthly repayment on an average £50,000 loan. Others, including Halifax and Nationwide, are considering whether to follow suit.

Professor McWilliams said: "House price inflation will have to be levelled off somehow. The problem with using interest rates as the main weapon is that the exporting sector and the corporate sector in general suffer collateral damage from a strong pound."

The pound rose above DM3 last Friday as some currency experts said sterling was more overvalued than at any time since the Conservative seizure of the manufacturing sector in the early 1980s. An analysis by BZW suggests the pound is as overvalued now as it was shortly after the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, when it had a devastating impact on industry.

With some analysts believing the pound could be between 15 and 20 per cent overvalued against the mark and the dollar, Goldman Sachs is understood to have started advising its clients to sell sterling. The American bank has predicted a fall to DM2.40 over the next year.

According to Dun & Bradstreet, the manufacturing sector

is more pessimistic than at any time since 1991. Only 55 per cent expect an increase in exports over the next three months and they are forecasting lower prices as a result.

Not all experts agree with Professor McWilliams' prediction. Professor David Miles, of Imperial College, said: "We could get to house price inflation of above 10 per cent without having to worry about bubbles and frenzy. The Government and Bank of England should not start panicking yet."

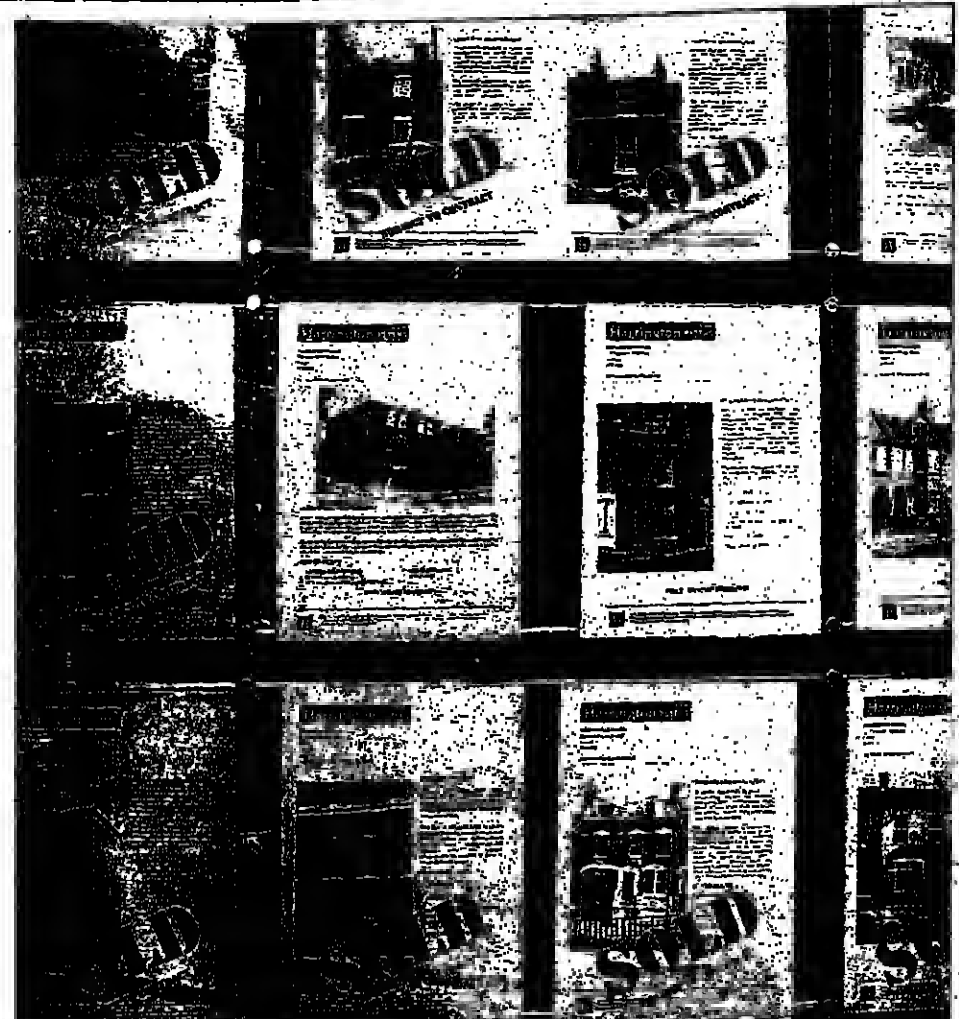
The deep slump in the market meant prices were about 10 to 15 per cent undervalued in real terms, he said. In addition, the long-run trend was for house price inflation to exceed the general inflation level because of the fact that land was in fixed supply.

However, the Chancellor introduced the Budget changes as a bid to calm the housing market. In his speech he said: "I will not allow house prices to get out of control and put at risk the sustainability of the recovery."

But economists agree the tax changes will have had little impact. Simon Briscoe, chief economist at Nikko Europe, said: "It was right to increase stamp duty on higher-priced properties. But the Budget measures were so feeble they were not worth bothering about."

He argued that the reduction in MIRAS would hit average households, where house price inflation was out of a danger, and do nothing to skim the froth off the top end of the housing market.

There are two very separate housing markets - the South-east and the rest. The Budget is not going to affect the international businessman on a six-figure salary," he said. Recent regional house price figures from Halifax confirmed this pattern. Annual house price inflation for the UK as a whole was 7.1 per cent in the year to June. But the annual rate of increase in Greater London was 16.1 per cent, compared with 2.3 per cent in the North and no change in Scotland.



Gordon Brown sliced £88 off average house prices, which are rising by £7,000 a year.

Littlewoods faces writ after bribery case fails

Randeep Ramesh

Littlewoods is to be sued by one of its British consultants after the pools and retail group passed details of its alleged activities to police in Singapore, which led to its arrest.

Nicholas Leese, 40, was charged in 1996 by Singapore's Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau with taking bribes but was exonerated when a judge threw out his case last month. The charges led to Mr Leese losing his passport and being held by police on 210 counts of corruption. He was only released when friends stumped up bail of \$50,000 Singapore dollars (£21,000).

Mr Leese said he would issue a writ for defamation through his lawyers in Singapore. "My reputation was dragged through the mud. I was taken by the police at 7.30 in the morning from a friend's flat. I was on the night news. I was handcuffed and led away. It is hardly a recommendation in the Far East."

"The whole affair has made it very difficult to continue trading in Singapore and I believe I have lost substantial earnings as a result," said Mr Leese.

Littlewoods sent its head of internal audit, Gary Speakman, to Singapore to testify in the case for the prosecution. The charges alleged bribes worth \$12,000 (£5,000). "It was a ridiculous set of charges. On one count I was alleged to have taken a kickback of less than \$1," said Mr Leese.

"I believed that the Singaporean system would prove my innocence, which it did, and that is why I am preparing to take legal action there."

Littlewoods accepts that it gave information to the authorities. "We believe the matter may be reinstated and cannot comment on Mr Leese's actions," said a spokeswoman.

The case is the latest twist in the colourful tale of one of Britain's richest families, the Moores, who own Littlewoods. The company launched an investigation in 1994 into a deal between Littlewoods and a Far Eastern trading company, Lorad, run by Mr Leese.

The Singapore-based company was used by Littlewoods in order to cut out middlemen when buying merchandise in Asia. The deal between the company and Lorad was set up by a group of senior executives, all of whom have subsequently been ousted or left.

One faction of the Moores family became so concerned about the deal with Lorad that it hired a private detective agency, Network Security Management, to investigate the transaction.

However, there has recently been some disquiet over the bills clocked up by Network - believed to top £15m. It has been accused of "interrogating" managers - one even ended up on a course of valium - in pursuing its investigation.

Documents seen by The Independent show that the Littlewoods board was concerned whether "the activities undertaken by [Network] are in the interests of the company". Shareholders have also become increasingly uneasy about the ensuing investigations.

British Land attacked over incentive scheme

British Land's chairman, John Riblat, will come under fire at the property company's annual meeting today over plans to hand free shares to directors as a reward for their long-term performance. The corporate governance lobby group Pirc is urging shareholders to oppose a proposed long-term incentive plan on the grounds that its targets are too easy to achieve.

According to Pirc, British Land's directors stand to be rewarded if the company merely matches the average capital growth in the property market rather than outperforming it. It also says the proposed scheme measures performance over too short a period and criticises the fact that British Land's directors do not have any of their own money at risk.



John Riblat: Likely to face shareholder opposition

According to *Estates Gazette*, the property industry journal, Pirc has objected to the yardstick British Land has chosen to measure its performance. The incentive scheme compares the company's net asset value with the capital component of the Investment Property Databank's

annual index. According to Pirc, this is not a fair comparison because the IPD index measures the value of property owned by unborrowed institutions. Like most property companies, British Land uses balance sheet gearing to leverage the return to its shareholders and should therefore expect to outperform unsecured funds.

The scheme was amended. Last month British Land announced a 14.3 per cent increase in net assets per share during the year to March. Profits rose even more strongly, by 47 per cent to £91.2m, as it benefited from a spending spree that has seen 90 per cent of its £5bn property portfolio acquired in the past eight years.

The company has rejected Pirc's criticisms, saying it consulted with the Association of British Insurers, the National Association of Pension Funds and its main shareholders before proposing the scheme.

Last year, Mr Riblat received a bonus of £1.8m and five other directors shared £3.8m. Moorfield Estates, another property company, last year came under fire for an incentive scheme which could have been worth eight times its directors' salaries if the company had outperformed the IPD capital value index over five years. The scheme was amended.

IN BRIEF

● The Church of England plans to review its guidelines on ethical investments and focus more on the activities of individual companies rather than on broad investment categories after a debate by the General Synod in York on Saturday. At present the Church bans investment in companies operating in five major sectors: armaments, gambling, brewing and distilling, tobacco and newspapers.

● Office workers voted Newcastle the best place in Britain to work in, according to a survey of 15 working cities by property consultants Healey & Baker. Milton Keynes and Glasgow came next, while Cardiff, Southampton, Leeds and Manchester were voted equal fourth. Workers said ease of getting to work was the most important criterion.

● Chez Gérard, the quoted restaurant chain, opens its first Chez Gérard steak and fries restaurant in the City of London today in a listed building in Bishopsgate opposite the NatWest Tower. The group has five Chez Gérard restaurants in central London.

● WH Smith is launching a loyalty card this week, offering a 2 per cent discount, which it claims is twice the rebate offered by the supermarket chains. The company said the cards would provide it with useful information about its customers' shopping habits.

● Small and medium-sized businesses expect to expand by almost 13 per cent in the next 12 months, according to a survey by accountants BDO Stoy Hayward. Companies with a turnover of £15m-£50m and those in London and the South-east have the greatest confidence.

● Lloyd's names are being given the opportunity to convert their future underwriting at Lloyd's from unlimited to limited liability. Angerstein Underwriting Trust and its members' agent, Stace Barr, have produced a conversion scheme which will allow names to switch and still meet the stricter capital requirements needed for limited liability underwriting. Aberdeen Nomina and JO Hambro & Partners have also launched a scheme to allow conversion to limited liability underwriting.

ICI in talks with US giant over £2bn chemicals sale

Clifford German

ICI is negotiating the sale of a large part of its industrial chemicals division to DuPont, the American chemicals giant, for up to £2bn. The deal is expected to include Tioxide, the titanium dioxide maker which had originally been slated for a stock market flotation.

The decision to sell the business was taken in principle as part of a strategy of moving out of low-margin "commodity" chemicals into higher-value, faster-growing and specialist products. ICI had already gone down that path with the acquisition of Unilever's specialty chemicals division for £5bn in May. Charles Miller Smith, ICI's

chief executive, promised at the time of that deal to reduce the group's debts through a programme of disposals aimed at recouping £300 over three years. Roughly £1bn is being raised by floating the group's 62.5 per cent stake in ICI Australia, details of which were revealed last week.

A deal with DuPont, which has long harboured ambitions to expand its presence in Europe, would achieve the promised disposals well ahead of schedule. Profits in the industrial chemicals division have been hard hit by excess capacity and competition, sluggish growth and low prices world-wide. The division contributed only £109m to operating profits last year, representing a profit margin of only 2.5 per cent.

The industrial chemicals division employs 15,000 people world-wide and the proposals will inevitably raise fears of redundancies, especially on Teesside, at Runcorn and several smaller sites in the UK. The competitive pressures on the division have been compounded

this year by the strong pound. A deal between the two companies would not be unprecedented. In an earlier agreement, ICI acquired DuPont's acrylics business while the American company took over ICI's fibres plant on Teesside.

Other businesses thought to be part of the sale include ICI Chemicals & Polymers.

STOCK MARKETS									
FTSE 100									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Change%	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low
FTSE 100	4799.50	+13.3	+0.3	4931.70	3058.60	3.40			
FTSE 250	4408.30	+4.7	+1.0	4729.40	3386.20	3.76			
FTSE 350	2201.80	-8.5	-0.4	2291.50	2017.90	3.47			
FTSE 400	2204.30	-2.3	-0.1	2274.20	2178.20	3.21			
FTSE All-Share	2250.41	+0.2	+0.0	2289.36	1989.78	3.48			
New York	7921.82	+26.01	+0.3	7982.31	6923.84	1.63			
Tokyo	19875.49	-82.5	-0.5	20891.07	17305.85	0.81			
Hong Kong	15235.29	+402.3	+2.7	16225.29	12055.17	2.54			
Frankfurt	4040.97	+98.1	+2.5	4055.66	3948.77	1.97			

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
UK interest rates									
US interest rates									
Money Market Rates									
Index	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year	2 Year	3 Year	4 Year	5 Year	10 Year
UK	8.72	7.44	7.01	7.26	7.04	7.87			
US	5.68	5.91	6.22	6.54	6.53	7.08			
Japan	0.58	0.78	0.28	3.21					
Germany	3.12	3.22	5.34	6.53	6.36				

CURRENCIES									
\$/£									
\$/DM									
Pound vs.									
Index	Close	Week's chg	Tr. High	Tr. Low	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	1996/97 High
\$ (London)	1.8246	+0.08%	1.8557						
\$ (NY)	1.8246	+0.08%	1.8557						
DM (London)	2.9897	+3.67%	2.9872						
DM (London)	1.7899	+1.57%	1.8217						
¥ (London)	192.800	+70.810	171.493						
¥ (London)	113.855	+10.045	110.636						
¥ (London)	105.0	+1.0	86.5						
¥ (London)	102.6	+0.2	97.4						

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GAVYN DAVIES

'It was within the power of government to have slowed the stampede to a manageable pace by raising the electoral hurdle required for the building societies to go public'

This windfall disaster could have been prevented

I was recently described to me, by a senior Treasury official, as one of the greatest disasters to hit the British economy since the war. It could have been stopped by the last government, but was not – for motives that were not necessarily the best. It has, in mitigation, made more ordinary people better off than they probably ever dreamed – but unfortunately at totally the wrong time in the business cycle. It is the greatest headache facing monetary and fiscal policy in the UK today.

I refer, of course, to the £37bn windfall gain which consumers are enjoying this year as a result of the transformation of many building societies from mutual societies into public companies, quoted on the Stock Exchange. This sum is equivalent to almost 5 per cent of UK national income this year, and 7 per cent of consumers' expenditure. It is a potential disaster because it injects into the system a massive dose of new spending power just at a time when consumers' confidence was already surging, and when retail sales were already rising at an unsustainable rate of 5-6 per cent per annum.

Because the financial markets have assumed that the Bank of England will respond to this spending spree by raising interest rates, the exchange rate has risen sharply, and is now about 18 per cent overvalued, according to calculations by Goldman Sachs. This rise in sterling is temporarily suppressing inflation tendencies, but will eventually lead to a balance of payments problems and then to a decline in industrial production. Ironically, we seem to be facing a repeat of the problems of the late 1980s, when another phenomenon relating to building societies – the abolition of restrictions on their lending behaviour – helped to blow the lid off the economy, thus causing the recession of 1990-91.

Given the risks that this involves, it is worth asking how it ever was allowed to happen. Under the Building Societies Act of 1986, the humble thrift institutions which had rendered such valuable service over a century or more to small investors and housebuyers were allowed to transform themselves into public companies, provided that they could obtain the consent of 75 per cent of their members (not just those who voted in any ballot, but all members) to make the change. The idea was to provide a level playing field for competition within the financial services industry, hopefully leading to better service for customers in the long term. A very laudable micro-economic objective – but one fraught with very great macro-economic risks, if the process of change should happen too precipitously.

During 1994/95, it became apparent that change would happen very precipitously indeed. The takeover of Cheltenham &

Gloucester by Lloyds Bank was swiftly approved by the owners of the mutual society, and the Treasury (knowing that financial markets can be creatures of mass psychology) became acutely aware that sweeping changes to our most important savings institutions could soon be afoot. Several legal judgments had just clarified the voting requirements which the societies needed to fulfil before they could go public, and these judgments greatly reduced the electoral hurdle that had to be crossed.

Essentially, it became possible for new members to vote in the decision to go public, even if they did not qualify under the previous rule which required membership for two years before enfranchisement. This meant that "carpetbaggers", who were switching around their building society accounts simply in the hope of making instant windfall gains, could vote in the process, making a 75 per cent "yes" vote far more likely than before.

It was at this point that ministers could have stepped in to slow the process. Apparently, they were asked to do so by Treasury officials, who claim to have spotted the macro-economic dangers by this time. The best way of throwing sand into the wheels would have been to have insisted that the old two-year voting rule should continue to apply, though it may have required legislation to accomplish this. Perhaps something more forceful would have been required – say an extension of the voting rule to five years of membership – but it was within the power of government to have slowed the stampede to a manageable pace by raising the electoral hurdle required for the societies to go public.

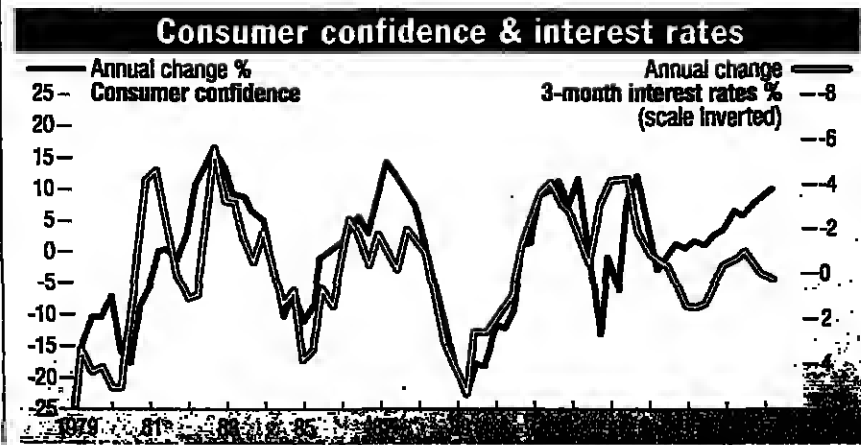
Treasury officials say that ministers justified their decision to allow the stampede to go ahead in the name of increasing competition in the financial sector, but that they really took the decision with one eye on boosting the feelgood factor around election time. If the government had done this by making equivalent cuts in consumer taxation, it would have been drummed out of office for crass electoral "bribery", but no one seemed to notice the impact of these arcane changes in the voting procedures of mutual societies.

Worse still, many economists denied that the impact would be very big. At a meeting of Ken Clarke's "wise persons" with the last Chancellor in 1996, I was astonished to be the only one of the panel who argued that the windfalls could have large and damaging effects on consumer spending. The others argued that increases in wealth of this type were not likely to boost spending, because the owners of the building societies should already have made allowance for this notional wealth in their personal balance sheets.

Alternatively, the wise persons believed, consumers should have realised that in the long term they would be made worse off by the fact that lending rates would be higher, and deposit rates lower, as the transformed building societies sought to raise their lending margins to earn a higher return for their shareholders as public companies.

I am afraid that this struck me at the time as an example of how the best economists in the country can sometimes lose touch with common sense. I still have the same feeling. Of course it is possible to claim that £37bn of extra wealth is relatively small beer. It compares, for example, with a rise of £50bn in the value of the housing stock, and a rise of £271bn in the value of personal sector holdings in the stock market, in the past year. In comparison with these changes, the building society bombshell does not look very large, but the difference is that the latter is particularly visible to households – they receive letters telling them that they are suddenly several thousand pounds better off – and they extend to people who have no other form of assets, and who are therefore more likely to spend the gains.

Admittedly, it is still too early to assess the full extent of the damage which has been done by this manoeuvre. But recent evidence is that the size of the windfall will be almost twice the £20bn expected at the start of the year, and that up to 25 per cent of the gains might leak into consumer spending, instead of the roughly 10 per cent assumed earlier. If these figures are right, they will be hard even for the most sceptical macro-economist to ignore. And as the economy struggles to negotiate the ensuing boom, we should not overlook the source of the problem – electioneering, though of a very subtle kind.



The safe slimming pill will bring fat profits

Take your weight in kilograms and divide it by the square of your height in metres. If the result is over 25, you are overweight. If it is over 30, you are obese. Don't panic – you are not alone.

According to recent statements by the World Health Organisation, we are in the throes of an obesity epidemic. The number of fatties world-wide has doubled in the past 10 years. Around 120 million people are classified as obese. The USA is the biggest culprit. A staggering one in three adult Americans is either obese or severely overweight. In Europe, a fifth of Italians and Germans are obese. The British are almost as bad, with 18 per cent ready for the fat farm.

The consequences are more than just a reduced quality of life. Obesity leads to a host of serious medical problems such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes,

arthritis, infertility, back pain, depression and even gallstones.

The costs are huge. In the US, complications of obesity account for \$45bn a year, or nearly 10 per cent of total healthcare spending. More than just overindulgence or weak will, obesity is increasingly being seen as an illness which can kill. The US drug regulator, the FDA, now classifies the condition as a disease – enabling sufferers to get anti-obesity drugs on prescription.

Even so, obesity is poorly treated at present, opening up a huge opportunity for the pharmaceutical industry.

Current drugs are limited to two kinds: amphetamines or phentermines, which speed up metabolism; and the newer serotonin uptake inhibitors or fenfluramines, which dampen appetite and which include some anti-depressants. Eli

Obesity is an epidemic. A cure would be a goldmine, writes Sameena Ahmad

Lilly's happy pill Prozac is increasingly being prescribed for weight loss.

Among approved amphetamines in the US are lisdexamfetamine, a second-generation product, SmithKline Beecham's aptly named Fastin and a whole range of cheap generics. The market-leading fat pill in the US is Redux, the serotonin drug developed by Servier of France and marketed by American Home Products. BASF is finally close to launching Meridia in the US, another serotonin drug initially rejected by the FDA last year because of fears it damaged the heart.

Indeed because both classes of drug act on the brain, side-effects can be serious. Long-term use of amphetamines can be addictive and there is little data on either type of drug to determine the effects of long-term use.

Dr Didier Renno from the Wilkerson Group, a management consultancy specialising in healthcare, says the risks of side-effects have restricted the size of the market in prescription anti-obesity drugs to \$380m world-wide, tiny by pharmaceutical standards. In contrast, Americans alone spend \$33bn a year on over-the-counter slimming aids. "People who are seriously overweight are desperate for a safe treatment. The potential is huge for a company which can make a such a drug," says Dr Renno.

Plenty of companies are trying. According to NatWest Securities, which estimates that there are nearly 30 anti-obesity drugs in clinical development, the prescription market could be worth \$9bn in 10 years.

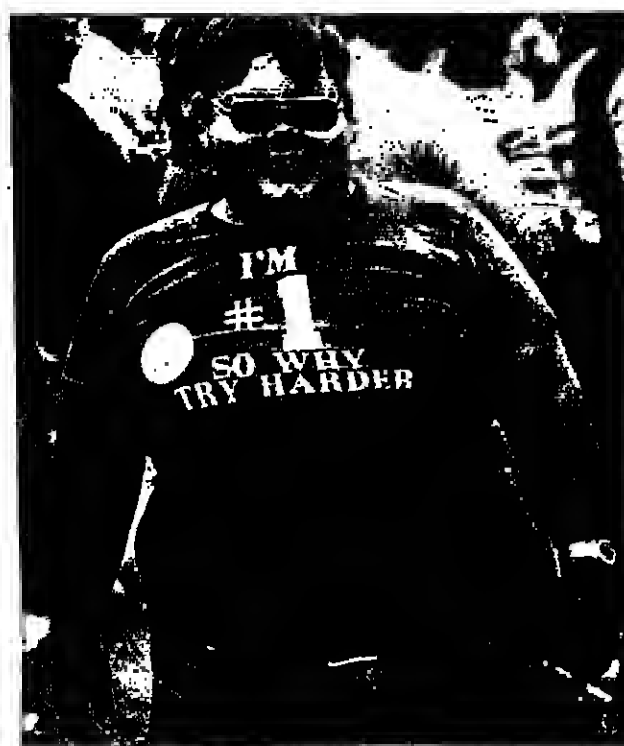
The biggest immediate hope is Roche's Xenical, due for launch in the US in a few months. The Swiss group's pill does not act on the brain, but locally to stop the stomach absorbing fat. Taken three times a day with meals, this treatment blocks almost a third of fat ingested with food, reducing weight by about 10 per cent in a year.

"For someone who is severely obese, the medical benefits of that loss can be substantial. And Xenical has a completely different safety profile from other drugs," said a Roche spokesman. Crucially for the

FDA, which has given Xenical fast-track approval, Roche has long-term clinical data over two years on over 7,000 patients to prove its safety claims.

Kevin Scotcher at NatWest estimates the drug could be a blockbuster, worth \$800m at peak. Alizyme, the UK listed group, is working on a similar drug which stops the gut absorbing fat and sugars, though it has not started clinical trials. Dr Richard Palmer, chief executive at Alizyme, says: "Obesity is a serious problem and is beginning to be seen in younger age groups. A safe drug is potentially worth millions."

A new generation of safe drugs could mean popping pills for obesity will become as standard as long-term treatment for hypertension. That could turn into a goldmine for the pharmaceutical industry.



The number of fatties world-wide has doubled in 10 years

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Pakistan	£1.33	80p	UAE	£1.02	55p
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